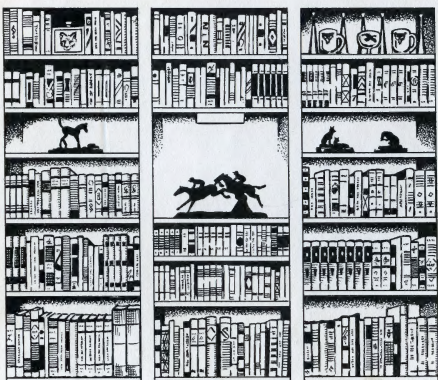
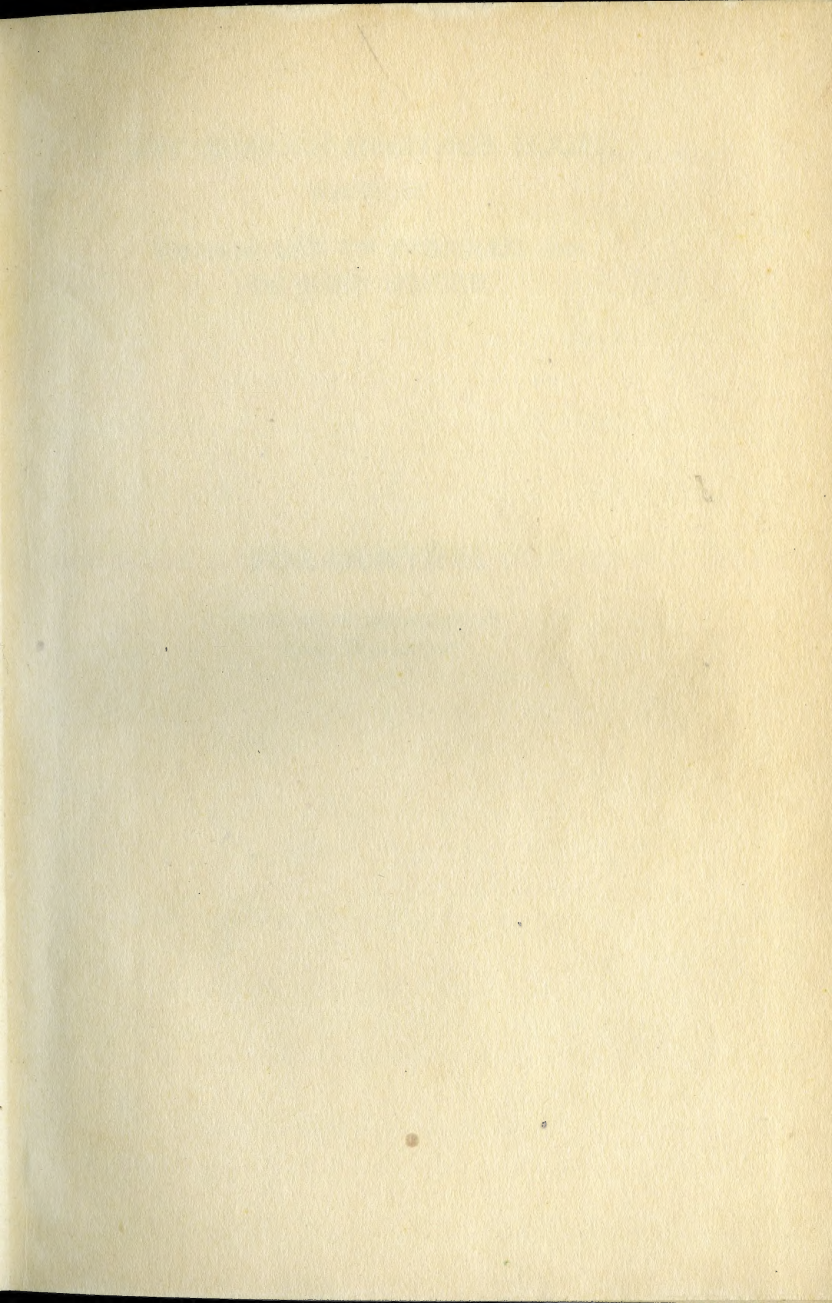
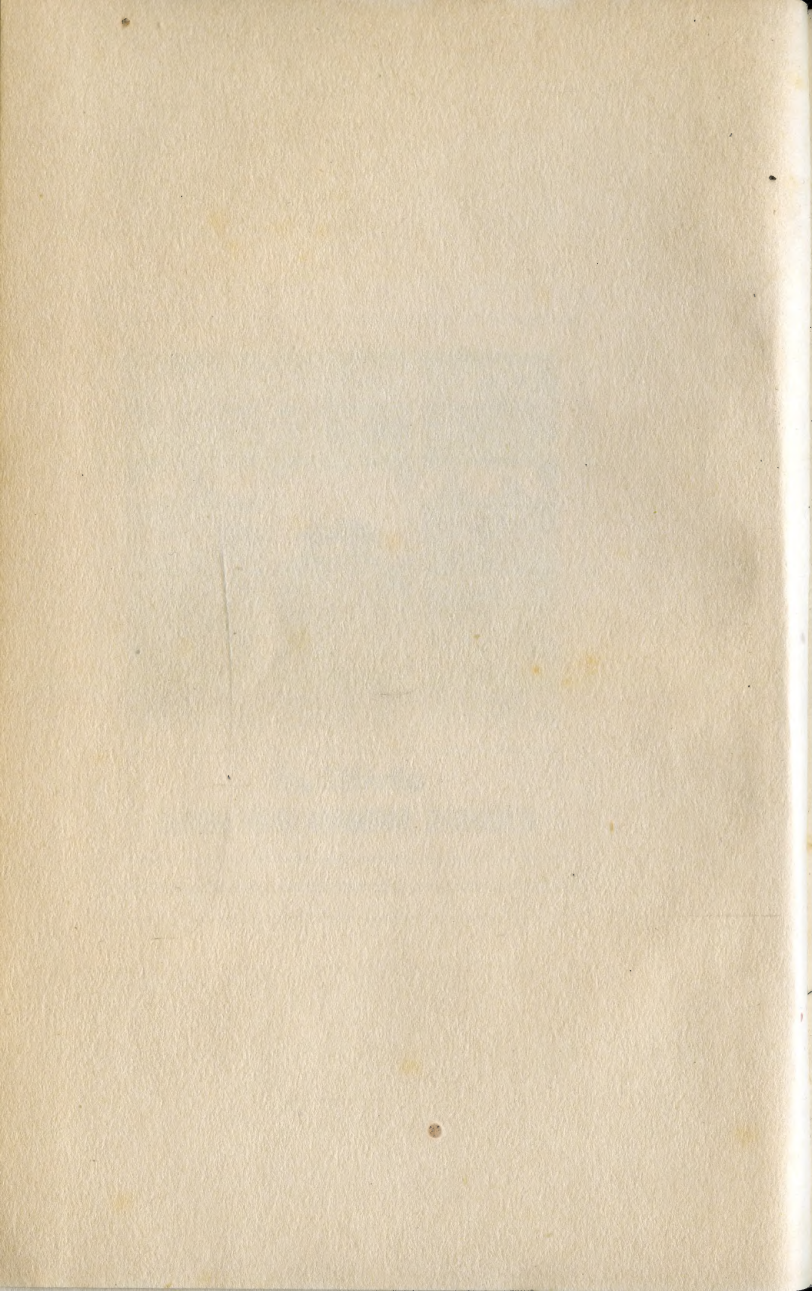






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INTRODUCTION

THE authoress has herself written so excellent and charming a Foreword that this essay of mine seems a work of supererogation.

Most people, even its devoted adherents like me, agree that fox-hunting is, in this age, an anachronism. But so are many picturesque and valued features of our national life. Take the case of the Household Cavalry. In all ordinary circumstances, the police, mounted and foot, supply adequate protection to His Majesty and his subjects in London. Should an extraordinary (almost unbelievable) situation arise, necessitating the use of greater force than truncheons, there are several far more effective weapons than cavalry sabres. Yet, very properly, there would be a great outcry if the "Blues" and the Life-guards were abolished. The public would feel keenly the deprivation of a daily spectacle in which historical continuity, a magnificent display of colour, and superb discipline are happily blended.

The charge of cruelty brought against fox-hunting can be fairly answered by pointing out that if, on that score, it is to be prohibited, there are many forms of taking animal life which, in strict logic, should be made illegal before fox-hunting is. Foxes do not, as a result of being hunted, go about for hours—it may be days—with broken limbs, as happens to game-birds, even in the best regulated

shoot. Nor are they held by a hook in their mouth, in an effort to kill them by slow exhaustion, as are some fish.

They do not die painfully of asphyxiation, by being hauled on to the deck of a trawler in nets, as do millions of other fish. In hunting countries at least they do not suffer the agonies of death by strychnine poisoning, or steel trap, as do countless billions of less fortunate vermin. Without making the silly statement that a fox likes to be hunted, one can at least assert that many foxes treat the process with comparative unconcern, relying upon their natural craft to escape from hounds again and again, in many cases to die, at last, of natural causes.

It is fair to assume that some opponents, on the score of cruelty, of fox-hunting, are, like the Puritans of old, less concerned with the pain caused to the animal than the satisfaction which hunting gives to its followers. But, as Mr. Kipling has so aptly pointed out, the real "blood sport" is not hunting, but fast motoring.

The charge of damage done by fox-hunting to agricultural interests will not stand the test of analysis. Go and look at a farm, much ridden in any particular hunting season, in the following July, and you will find it hard to discover any concrete loss of grass or grain thereby. The prevailing modern system of keeping poultry in wire pens, moved from time to time (for quite other reasons than protection from their enemies) has largely nullified the danger to this industry from foxes.

Having regard to the number of small owners of land, and owner-occupiers—men of independence,

beholden to no one—now existing in every hunting country, it is certain that, if the damage done thereby was as great as hostile town critics suggest, hunting would long ago have ceased.

One further accusation against the sport should be refuted: that, from its nature, it is and can be followed only by irresponsible persons, devoid of intellectual interests, who like galloping in an inane fashion, clad in garments of the early nineteenth century, over the country-side. The modern inventor of this travesty was Oscar Wilde, in his famous phrase, "the pursuit of the uneatable by the unspeakable." My friend, Mr. A. P. Herbert, has enlarged on the same theme, as have many less famous writers, usually people with "left" tendencies, to whom what they regard as a rich man's pastime is naturally abhorrent.

They have received adventitious aid in presenting their case from the fact that in "Society" journals, pictures of hunting folk usually consist of groups of what the eighteenth century called "Fashionables," surrounded by every evidence of luxury, at meets of hounds in those few countries where only rich people (many of them foreigners, or with recently acquired wealth) can afford the high-priced horses that are necessary. These countries, though possessing great advantages, are not typical of British hunting as a whole.

Go to any provincial country, and you will see dozens of people following hounds who own a single horse, or who have to rely upon a bicycle or their own legs. They are of different types and callings, including manual labourers, to many of

whom hunting affords the only variety and excitement they ever experience. Among them are, and have always been, many men and women who take a foremost place in the local community in which they live, and some in the public life of the nation. To see the hunt properly, they must have patience, skill, and physical fitness, as well as imperviousness to the vagaries of the weather, fatigue, and discomfort.

They must, in fact, possess those qualities which nations, however over-urbanised and divorced from the soil they may be, despise at their peril.

If the gibes of our intelligentsia at hunting, as fit only for half-wits, be true, how can the fondness of the French for it be explained? Admittedly, no nation has a higher intellectual standard, more regard for things of the mind, less reverence for the fatuous and useless. Yet hunting with hounds has always flourished in France, to a greater extent than it has anywhere except in Britain.

The contention of this class of critics is the reverse of the truth. I think that one of the editors of this series, Sir John Squire, once said that men and women had to have something of poetry within them to get the best enjoyment out of hunting. You need at least a measure of artistic perception and sensitiveness. There is a physical rhythm that is unsurpassable in riding a well-bred horse, with good shoulders, fully stretched out, but properly balanced, over sound turf. Nothing, not even a plough team at work, fits with such perfect symmetry into the background of the English countryside as hounds in full cry. A good pack of hounds

shows a fascinating technique, both acquired and hereditary, in hunting the line of a fox.

Even the weather has its charm, because of its fickleness. In the west and south of England, especially in late winter, one gets days when in the morning massed battalions of grey cloud hurry across the landscape, pouring forth torrents of rain. You start out hunting, pitying your horse and yourself. At noon a gleam of light appears on the horizon. By three or four o'clock a glorious sun shines from a blue sky, on a scene of sparkling cleanliness and purity. Hills, trees, bushes, even young wheat, show up with a clear-cut distinctness that one associates with Spain or Italy. You see England as she was before so much of her profile became grimy with the smoke of industrialism.

But perhaps all that I have written is merely special pleading, like a man trying to explain why he has fallen in love. The simple reason for, and justification of, hunting was long ago given by James Pigg, "There's nought like hunting."

WINTERTON.



FOREWORD

THIS book is not intended in any way as a treatise on hunting. Such books have been written, from time to time, since the days of Edward II, by far more competent people than myself. But it must now and then have occurred to those who are interested in hunting to wonder wherein really does lie the fascination, and I have tried to discover some of the springs which keep that fascination, like a perpetual stream, always fresh and new.

It is, perhaps, rather like a river: the same and yet always with some different enchantment, whether of setting and scenery, of light and shade on the water, of changing course from marshy moorland to open fields and long, peaceful, wooded reaches. The interest may lie for a time in the different craft that ply on it, in the bird life about its banks, or in the hidden life below the surface; the endless springs which feed its source, or the tributaries which bring fresh vigour from different surroundings. There is always something new, some suddenly revealed, hitherto unremembered beauty, which is constantly deceiving the observer into thinking that, at last, he has unmasked the secret and found the essential element in the composition of its charm. Five minutes after he has made this exciting discovery he realises again that he is wrong, and the question still unanswered.

So it is with hunting. One day you think its spell is in the riding, the neatness and cleverness of your horse, or the exhilaration that comes from a piece of fast galloping with plenty of fences; then you know that you are wrong, and that it lies in the genius of the houndwork, or in the country, or in the quick flash of insight which you get into some unexpected corner of the huntsman's mind, as he thinks with the fox and works with his hounds, or in the good comradeship of your fellows, or in some new craftiness displayed by the fox.

It is none of these, and yet all. It lies in the past, the present, and the future: it is a different thing to every one, and no one person will ever find, and no book ever finally describe it. Every backwater and tributary, every stickle and deep pool, every quiet reach and heady cataract, adds a fresh delight to the whole. That delight will never be better described than it was in Charles II's reign, when an enthusiast on hunting wrote:

"It is no small advantage to be enured to bear Hunger, Thirst and Weariness from one's Childhood; to take up a timely habit of quitting one's Bed early, and loving to sit fast and well upon an Horse. What innocent and natural delights are they when he seeth the Day breaking forth those Blushes and Roses which Poets and Writers of Romances onely paint, but the Huntsman truly courts? When he heareth the chirping of small Birds pearching upon their dewy Boughs? When he draws in the fragrancy and coolness of the

Air? How jolly is his Spirit, when he suffers it to be imported with the noise of Bugle-Horns, and the baying of Hounds, which leap and play round about him!

"Then it is admirable to observe the natural instinct of Enmity and Cunning, whereby one Beast being as it were confederate with man, by whom he is maintained, serves him in his designs upon others. How perfect is the Scent or Smell of an Hound, who never leaves it, but follows it through innumerable changes and varieties of other Scents, even over and in the Water, and into the Earth? . . . Moreover, is it not delightful and pleasant to observe the Docibleness of Dogs, which is as admirable as their Understanding? For as a right Huntsman knows the Language of his Hounds, so they know his, and the meaning of their own Kinde, as perfectly as we can distinguish the voices of our friends and acquaintances from such as are strangers.

"Again, how satisfied is a curious Minde, nay exceedingly delighted, to see the Game fly before him! and after it hath withdrawn itself from his sight, to see the whole Line where it hath passed over, with all the doublings and cross works . . . recovered again; and all the maze wrought out by the intelligence which he holds with Dogs! this is most pleasant, and as it were a Maisterpiece of natural Magick. . . .

"No Musick can be more ravishingly delightful than a Pack of Hounds in full cry, to such a man whose Heart and Ears are so happy to be set to the tune of such charming Instruments."

There we have it all. The indefinable satisfaction of sitting "fast and well upon an horse" which is one of the most elementary of all the delights of hunting; the setting for the whole day among the birds and in the open air; the thrill which is inseparable from the sound of the horn—a sound still beautiful even when its wailing note recalls hounds from a forlorn hope: a sound which has in it more than the magic of bugles, being, nearly enough, the music of war without its terror, a music of triumph without bitterness, of challenge without defiance. This writer was evidently a keen houndsman, and could probably, if he had chosen to abandon his admirable restraint, have written many pages as appreciative of the kinship which a good huntsman may claim with the instinctive genius of his hounds, as are these lines. It must indeed be a most incurious mind which could not be "exceedingly delighted" to see hounds sweep round on every turn of the line which a short-running fox has been seen to take, as though they had it plainly marked out before their eyes, and it is a wonderful thing to see, on a day of high wind, the pack owning and running the scent a dozen yards or so downwind of the line the fox has taken, as it is blown sideways off the true course.

It is this sense of being a sharer in what surely is a "Maisterpiece" of Nature, that accounts for a great deal of the mental joy that is to be found in hunting, and the knowledge that the magic is, in part, wrought by "the intelligence which he holds with Dogs" is, of all things, perhaps "most pleasant" to a Master, compensating him for the many trials and

disappointments incident to his calling. And, just as every "right Huntsman knows the language of his hounds," it is undoubtedly true that they know "the meaning of their own kind," and it is this that makes a homogeneous pack a more reliable and a better working team than one that is composed of drafts. With a pack that has grown up together, and in which each hound knows the voices of his "friends and acquaintances from such as are strangers," a young and irresponsible hound may lift up his voice to riot, but an old one, hearing it, will cock his ear, appraise the news at the value due to its bringer, and treat it with the contempt he knows it deserves; whereas, if he recognises the voice of an honest acquaintance, he will be quick to answer and act on it. In a pack which is not well acquainted with itself, where no tongue is known by its works, every rumour may be taken for truth, and no truth relied on, till, finally, hounds come to feel that it is hardly worth while throwing their tongues, and learn to run mute so that their music, than which none "can be more ravishingly delightful," is lost, and, with it, a great deal of the charm and delight in hunting.

Perhaps, then, the ultimate secret essence of this delight lies, after all, in the houndwork. But then—there is all the delight that comes from the riding itself; the delight in "the fragrantcy of the Air"; the delight of knowing your country in a more secret and intimate way than it can otherwise be known; the delight of the paradox expounded by Mr. Jorrocks, when he declared that in summer he loved the fox "with all Hardour of affection," but, "when

the hautumn comes, 'ow I glories in pursuing of him to destruction," and ended by reflecting, "It arn't that I loves the fox less, but that I loves the 'ound more"—a paradox which includes a love of the wiles and shifts of the fox, a matching of wit against his wit, and a sharing, through contact with him, in the secrecies of that unknowable wild life that is going on all the time behind the scenes of everyday existence.

Then again, there is the content that comes from being on terms of friendliness with almost every one in the hunting field, from the Master to the farmer who comes out on a half-broken cart-colt, and the sharing of a common interest with the whole country-side; and the delight of remembering the vicissitudes through which the history of horse and hound and hunting procedure has passed—in fact, the whole elusive, inexhaustible delight which the word hunting implies but will never define.

Like plenty of others, I have dived into these waters of delight and fished up a few of the treasures hidden below, choosing those which seemed to me to give additional interest to the whole subject. Not every man will find everything of equal interest, but Everyman is a many-sided person. What is not to his one humour may be to another, and, if none of my delights shall prove to be to anyone's humour but my own, Everyman will be so much the better off in that he may discover here several things which he can eliminate when, for the thousandth time, he tries to answer the question as to what it is that makes hunting so absorbing and never palling a pastime.

TO
THE MASTER
AND
STAFF
OF THE
BEST HUNT
IN THE
COUNTRY



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CHAPTER I

THE HORSE

CONSIDERING that the history of nations is largely dependent on the character of their rulers and great men, moulded, in part, by the national interests surrounding them, and that their hobbies and pastimes afford a valuable index to their characters, it is a little surprising that the teaching of history, as a rule, concerns itself so little with anything but their public deeds. Wars and the avoidance of wars, rebellions and their political causes, have too often made of history a dry crust of facts, underneath which is hidden the sweet and the sour of mixed motives and secret enthusiasms which lend a savour to the dullest of lives. Political and personal intrigue, the matching of army against army, the mining and counter-mining of adversaries' wits, may make the stuff of history, but the pattern is designed and coloured by private needs and interests, and through all our English history may be found running the golden thread of an interest in horses which might brighten and humanise the study for the most unwilling scholar.

Romans.

As far back as the days of the Romans, British horses had a great reputation throughout Cæsar's Empire, and, during his occupation, they were

crossed with the various breeds which composed the Roman cavalry. Later on, they were still in such request abroad that Athelstane (930) passed a law forbidding their export except as royal presents—an exception probably due to the fact that, having received a gift of “running horses” from Hugh Capet of France, he wanted to be in a position to return the compliment. From this time forward, horses afforded a pleasant medium for the exchange of courtesies between the monarchs of various countries.

Even in those early days it seems that horse-copers were flourishing, and the buyer was given certain periods of time, ranging from three days to a year, in order to discover any blemish, while in Wales, at any rate, the letter-out of a horse received, on a definite scale, compensation for the injury that a hireling so often suffers at the hands of his temporary riders. If the horse was so galled that “the flesh be forced into the bone,” the compensation was fixed at 16d., while 4d. for a small rub and 8d. “if the skin is forced into the flesh” was supposed to compensate the owner for the loss of his horse’s services during convalescence.

Normans.

From that time onwards there is scarcely a reign which does not afford some evidence of the national importance attached to horses, or of the private interest taken in them. The Normans brought over a good infusion of Spanish blood, and by the time of William II there was a definite attempt to breed on certain lines, for a lord in the Powys district of

Wales bred from imported Spanish horses, and that strain was still well known and sought after in Edward II's time.

Henry I (1100-1135) was presented with two Arab stallions, one of which he gave to Scotland, and by the time of Henry II tournaments were coming into fashion, and armour both for men and horses getting so cumbersome that larger, heavier, and stronger horses were in ever greater demand, and King John was driven to import a hundred large stallions from Flanders.

The Crusaders brought home with them a variety of Eastern horses, but the French and Scottish wars of Edward III took such toll of his war-horses that he bought largely from abroad.

Tudors.

Through the Wars of the Roses we have little information, but Henry VII found that, owing to the large herds that were running together in a wild state, the value of the home-bred horse was diminishing, and gelding was systematically practised, Henry VIII ordering that the wild horses should be periodically driven and weeded out, any below a standard of thirteen "handfuls" for mares and fifteen for horses to be discarded. This Henry seems to have been the first of our kings who kept what were called "running-horses" to any extent for his own private racing, and by the time of Elizabeth, when gunpowder was coming into use, and armour, therefore, going out, the demand for the "great-horse," which was called upon to carry an armoured weight of twenty-five stone

or more, was much decreased, lighter horses, both for war and pleasure, becoming more and more needed.

Elizabeth.

In Elizabeth's time, perhaps more than at any other, horses, their duties and management, furnished a sub-current of allusion and simile in daily life, of which Shakespeare gives unmistakable evidence to anyone who reads him with a mind alert for such references and meanings. A sport of one sort or another was an essential part of the education of a gentleman, and the pleasure of the "yeoman class." Aspiring young snobs found it necessary to study the books of field sports then beginning to appear, in order to learn the shibboleths of the society of which they wished to appear natural members. Falconry was in its prime, and though there was little or no real fox-hunting, sportsmen could have many a good gallop over the downs after their hawks, and there was always the deer or the hare to afford work for hounds. Shakespeare knew that riding to hounds after fox could also provide good sport, for he makes Venus urge Adonis to

"Uncouple at the timorous flying hare,
Or at the fox which lives by subtilty . . .
Pursue these fearful creatures o'er the downs,
And with thy well-breathed horse keep with thy
hounds."

Both horses and hounds occupied a good deal of attention in those days, and various works on

“husbandry” and “farriery” were written. For hunting and hawking at this time almost any kind of horse could be ridden—native-bred nags of one kind and another; or the Irish hobbie, a small, good-mouthed, easy-mannered little horse, but generally nervous and ill-broken except when trained to amble by having the fore and hind leg of the same side linked together by a leathern “trammel.” Those who did not intend to do much more than watch the sport without following, might turn up at the “meet” on one of the “great-,” or war-horses, and make up what was lacking in speed by showing off the skill of the *manège*, curveting and prancing in a way that was a kind of hall-mark of horsemanship. Charles I was so fond of this kind of display that he passed a law forbidding the use of snaffles for fear lest the art of bridling and bending to the bit should die out, and it must have needed no little ingenuity to make what amounted to a present-day shire-horse bend like a polo pony and show off like a circus palfrey. Scott, in *The Fortunes of Nigel*, gives a good picture of James I, a keen but indifferent rider, hunting on one of these super-trained horses.

“Seated deep in his demi-pique saddle, and so trussed up there as to make falling almost impossible, the rider, without either fear or hesitation, might increase or diminish the speed at which he rode, which, even on the most animating occasions of the chase, seldom exceeded three-fourths of a gallop, the horse keeping his haunches under him, and never stretching for-

ward beyond the managed pace of the academy. The security with which he chose to prosecute even this favourite and, in ordinary case, somewhat dangerous amusement . . . marked King James."

A favourite cross at that time seems to have been between an English mare and a Barbary horse, as producing speed and staying power, but as Blundeville, who wrote a treatise on horsemanship in Elizabeth's reign, says that "these exercises (*i.e.* hunting and hawking) killeth yearlie many a good gelding," the breed must have been degenerating, and it was high time that new efforts should be forthcoming, by the importation of Eastern blood, to stop this downhill trend.

Breeding Laws.

This deterioration in our home-bred horses seems to have been going on steadily. Great droves still ran wild on the moors and commons, and Henry VIII's gelding law does not seem to have checked the consequent dwindling process to any extent, for, deploring "the great decay of the generation and breeding of good and swift and strong horses," Blundeville made the suggestion that noblemen and gentry should do a little useful horse-breeding instead of keeping their parks only to preserve deer. That they did not do so already suggests that there was not, after all, much "galloping after the buck or long-winged hawk" on their part. As late as the time of the Armada, England was said to have nothing but "vile and ordinary horses," "very

indifferent, strong, heavy, slow draught-horses, or light and weak." Fifty years later this anxiety seems to have had some influence, for Markham, writing in James I's time, is most enthusiastic about English-bred horses, especially as hunters. "I do daily find," he wrote, "that the virtue, goodness, boldness, swiftness, and endurance of our true-bred English horses is equal with any other race of horses whatsoever." In his day, as in ours, however, it is true that "some men hold an opinion that every horse which can gallop may be made a hunting-horse . . . yet I am of that mind that if a horse has not some virtue more than ordinary . . . he is not worthy the name of a hunting-horse, and neither doth deserve the labour, cost, and good food which he must eat, nor the grace to be employed in such an honourable pastime."

His requirements were exacting. "They only, and none else, are most excellent for hunting, as having the strength of the war-horse, the toughness of the hunting-horse, the swiftness of the runner, the good pace of the traveller, a good breast (as) for the coach, a strong joint for the cart, and a back like a beam for the hamper," or pannier. Then he again bursts into praise of the home-bred. "The world doth not afford in all points . . . a better horse than the true-bred English horse for hunting . . . bred under a good clime, on firm ground, in a pure temperature." He definitely preferred an animal home-bred on both sides, though, of a jennet or Polander cross, he allows that "it is not amiss."

The great Markham Arabian, of whom so much has been heard, came to this country in 1616—the

year in which Raleigh was let out of the Tower and given a chance to save his reputation by substantiating his claim to know of a gold mine in the West—and from then onwards the question of cross-breeding exercised the mind of every one who was, or thought himself, an authority. Some would fancy a “Barbary,” some Arab blood: later on, a strain of coach-horse was not uncommon, and a dash of Exmoor pony is in great favour with some to this day, while the vexed question of “thoroughbred” or “cocktail” is still very much alive in some parts of the country. Early in the nineteenth century, Nimrod pointed out that, though a half-bred horse could provide everything in the way of manners, amenability to training, and comfort to ride, yet, when it came to enduring a prolonged trial of high speed, he was nowhere. He agrees, however, that the “thoroughbred” of the previous century was a very different horse from the thoroughbred of his day. Then, he says, “A cross between the . . . not quite thoroughbred horse and the common draught-mare was considered good enough,” and the famous rough-rider, Dick Christian, who flourished early in the last century, was very definite. “I never heard of a great thing done yet,” he said, “but it was done by a thoroughbred horse.”

The idea was prevalent that thoroughbreds would not face the big Leicestershire thorns, but Nimrod pays a high tribute to the Lord Charles Manners of that day for being the first definitely to banish the half-bred from his stable, and abolish that prejudice. Different horses, however, will be found to suit

different countries, and a thoroughbred may be said to be, among horses, what a Rolls-Royce is among cars. Certainly, in some of the "provincial" countries, a thoroughbred is as wasted as a Rolls-Royce in a country lane, and perhaps the question may be left at that.

Meanwhile, for a long time, breeding matters were primarily an affair of state: cavalry was always needed, and though there was a good deal of racing—even Cromwell encouraged it for the sake of his remounts—the popular interest in horses seems to have been concentrated on the pleasure of riding and owning a horse with good manners and good looks. There was, before Elizabeth's time, a particularity amounting to superstition on the subject of colour, and nearly all the old books contain minute directions as to what might be expected of a horse of a given colour.

Colour and Character.

A whole-coloured horse was in no favour at all, and one with no white in his face—"with a cloud in his face," as the phrase ran—was a byword for ill luck. Gervase Markham, who wrote a treatise on horses in the seventeenth century, says, "The horse that hath no white at all upon him, is furious, dogged, full of mischief and misfortune," and gives lengthy descriptions, with diagrams, of how to obtain a white—even a red—star or mark where desired, and it was a common practice for the horse-copers of Smithfield to fake markings that only the very expert could tell were not genuine.

"Elements" and Character.

Astrology was a very fashionable science in those days, and the influence of the "elements" on the colour and temper of a horse could be, presumably, infallibly discerned. A horse's temper was said to be composed of the four elements: earth, water, air, and fire. Too much proportion of earth made a horse melancholy, faint-hearted, and heavy, and showed in blacks, "russets," and duns, while milk-whites, having too much "water," would be phlegmatic, slow, dull, and apt to lose flesh. A bay would be pleasant, sanguine, and nimble, having a good admixture of air, and a sorrel hot, light, fiery, and of no great strength, like fire. The perfect horse was equably blended, and most likely a roan. Even to-day some people will affirm that all blacks are vicious, all chestnuts "nappy," while others will buy a black or a chestnut if they possibly can. Others dislike roans, though these seem to have been favourites with Shakespeare. The Dauphin in *Henry V* had a roan horse who was all "pure air and fire, and the dull elements of earth and water never appear in him." His owner "once wrote a sonnet in his praise and began thus: 'Wonder of nature,'" declaring that "earth sings when he touches it." He was obviously young in his enthusiasm, and it may be doubted whether the keenest present-day man would get even so far with a sonnet to his horse. Professor Madden, in his enchanting book, *The Diary of Master William Silence*, has a pleasant fancy that at about the time he wrote this, Shakespeare had just discovered the

glory of riding a Barbary (roan) horse, for it was the news that Bolingbroke had ridden his own favourite roan, Barbary, for his coronation, that made the unhappy Richard II cry out:

“Rode he on Barbary? Tell me, gentle friend,
How went he under him?”

and when the groom answered: “So proudly, as if he disdained the ground,” the King burst out in reproach:

“That jade that hath eat bread from my royal
hand:

This hand hath made him proud with clapping
him.

Would he not stumble? Would he not fall
down,

(Since pride must have a fall) and break the neck
Of that proud man that did usurp his back? . . .

Forgiveness, horse! Why do I rail on thee,
Since thou, created to be aw'd by man,
Wast born to bear? . . .”

perhaps one of the few sentimental, and most human notes struck in all Shakespeare's plays.

James I also seems to have had a favourite horse of this colour, for a courtier, instructing a friend as to how best to get into the King's good graces, says, “Above all things, fail not to praise the roan jennet whereon the King doth daily ride,” and perhaps there was a general sway of fashion in the direction of this colour at the time.

Smithfield Market.

From the early days of Henry II, the great horse-mart was at Smithfield, and horse-fairs were held there every Friday. It seems to have been a general meeting-place, not only for horse-dealers, but for vagabonds of all kinds, and Froissart says that various political schemers found the company there very convenient for their purpose. It was probably safe enough from the intrusion of honest and inconveniently loyal men. It was notorious through the centuries as a haunt of scoundrels, and there was current a proverb to the effect that: "A man must not make choice of three things in three places: of a wife in Westminster; of a servant in Paul's; of a horse in Smithfield." Horse-stealing was a widespread evil, and it does not need much imagination to picture the company and the doings in that villainous forerunner of the present irreproachable Tattersall's.

"King's Mares" and Hunter Plates.

Queen Elizabeth herself was a great rider, and took a very considerable interest in both racing and hunting, keeping a careful eye on the standard of horse-breeding in her country, and James I seems to have been keener still, though his interest in breeding was chiefly for racing purposes. It was he who was responsible for the Markham Arabian, and it was Charles II who imported the four mares known in the pedigrees as King's mares. Racing attracted more and more attention, with the result that it was hard to find horses that had any other

qualification than the one of speed. There was so marked a lack of useful hunters that, in Queen Anne's reign, money was found to establish special "Hunters' Plates" for horses carrying twelve stone over three heats of four miles each—the races "to be finished on the same day as begun." This had the immediate result of encouraging the breeding of a good, hunter-like stamp of horse, for, as Sir Walter Gilbey says, "If a horse did not win these stakes, he was yet strong enough to make a good hunter," and these "Royal Plates," as they were called, probably mark the beginning of hunter breeding as we know it.

This definite effort to obtain stamina was so successful that it may well be remembered to-day, when in so many cases hunters are looked upon almost solely as prospective Point-to-Point winners, and the heavy-weight classes, where they exist, receive bitter criticism from the light-weight owner, who complains of the "unfairness" of being obliged to carry lead. Yet a farmer's pony has recently been known to win two races on the same day, carrying very nearly a stone in his weight cloth.

In George I's reign there was a good deal of Eastern blood again imported—it was in 1724 that the Godolphin Arabian appeared—and in George III's time—that Cornish pasty of a reign to which it is almost safe to assign anything that is of doubtful date, from Chippendale chairs to vague wars and revolutions—hunting seems definitely to have got beyond the pioneer and experimental stage, and to have come into its glorious own. It begins to be possible to see daylight through the tangled meshes

of history, legend, and tradition, into which is woven the story of horses considered chiefly from a hunting point of view, and it is during those years that a revolution came over the methods of riding to hounds.

Hard Riding.

If the "System of Meynell" (who was born in 1735) put present-day methods of conducting a hunt on a firm basis, it is generally supposed that William Childe (born 1756), Squire of Kinlet Hall, Shropshire, was the first to introduce "the present spirited method of riding to hounds," and to have been, therefore, a thorn in the flesh of Meynell and his followers. Certainly, up to the third decade of the eighteenth century, hunting was a much slower affair than it is now. Horses were not yet clipped, and to get a run at all it was necessary to meet early in the morning, as soon as it was light, drag up to a fox, and unkennel him while his supper was still undigested. Slow runs of remarkable length—the pace averaging perhaps two and a half miles an hour—make up most of the records of that time, and, as a matter of course, the jumps were taken standing. But, with the Old Charlton Hunt in Sussex, at the time of Monmouth's rebellion, it is recorded that the Duke of Buckingham rode down one of the steepest hills in Sussex, and jumped a gate at the bottom. This may, as is supposed, indicate that the Duke galloped down the hill and flew the gate, but it seems more likely that his performance was singled out because he jumped the gate instead of opening it—another side comment on the

jumping habits of old days. Men certainly seem, then, to have ridden to hunt, and to have been very keen houndsmen, chiefly interested in the "science" side of hunting. With hunters still unclipped and not even shaved, like the "Flying Parson" Empson's horse, or that of the Swell who astonished the Surrey, and in such bad condition that a hard day killed many of them, this interest formed almost the whole attraction. With Squire Childe—the "Flying Childe"—and his friend Lord Forester, we find the beginnings of that over-impetuosity which has been so trying to Masters and keen houndsmen ever since. Of Forester it is recorded that the unfortunate Meynell, describing a run, said bitterly, "We had a pretty find to-day. First came the fox, then Cecil Forester, and *then* my hounds." Almost identical is the more recent complaint made by the Master of the hunt that bears his name, whose temper had been much tried by young enthusiasts from Aldershot and Sandhurst. To a friend who asked what sport he had been having, he replied gloomily: "Splendid. First come the young gentlemen from Sandhurst; next the young gentlemen from Aldershot. Then the rest of the field; then the hounds, then the fox, and last of all poor, b . . . y old Garth."

Mr. Shaw Sparrow, however, in his introduction to the 1926 edition of Nimrod's *Hunting Reminiscences*, removes the credit—or otherwise—from Childe, and gives it to the artist, James Seymour, who died in 1752, four years before Childe was born, and who painted two "Flying Leap" pictures, one showing a man jumping a five-barred gate, and the other flying a brook. Childe, however, was probably

the first to introduce this "madcap" style of riding into a country well enough known to form a subject of general interest. From then on, at any rate, the practice of hard riding gradually became general, and, as a corollary, both hounds and horses were bred for more speed, and well-known hunters became as famous as race-horses. Handsome, well-shaped horses were naturally, as always, thought highly of, and paid highly for, though an occasional exception would crop up. Whyte-Melville records having seen an eighteen-stone man leave a Pytchley field standing, on a "tall, narrow, plain-headed horse, with very bad shoulders and very long legs," and adds that the three heaviest men he knew, good men to hounds, rode remarkably long-backed animals.

Notwithstanding the increased attention being paid throughout the eighteenth century to the care and breeding of hunters, it was no uncommon occurrence for horses to die of exhaustion, either during a run or immediately afterwards, a fact which suggests that, for some time, the speed of hounds increased too rapidly for the horses. The men were also extremely reckless, and occasionally heartless, for Nimrod gives a dreadful tale of a man riding a willing young one to death, in spite of knowing that, early in the run, the horse had an eye scratched out.

Apart from the general hard riding in the hunting field, there was a great deal of outside riding for wagers, due partly to the spirit of jealous rivalry with which men were ready to back their own horses against all comers, and partly to the fact that any new delight is apt to be overdone at first, and the

excitement of riding fast across country was one of the headiest discoveries of a heady age. Moreover, when hunting, a man could presumably find various excuses for his own or his horse's failure. There is a tale of one faint heart who was seen leading his horse across a very stiffly fenced field, and holding up, as his reason, a shoe which, presumably, his horse had just cast. Unfortunately for him, a keen-eyed observer pointed out that the horse had all four shoes on his feet, so that cock could never fight again. But a race ridden under certain given conditions allowed no margin for avoidable error, and one of the most famous of these wagers is that of Osbaldeston, who rode fifty consecutive four-mile heats in nine hours in 1831. The betting was tremendous and the wager itself for £1000, Osbaldeston to have as many horses as he liked. He beat his own suggested time of ten hours, and used twenty-eight horses, some of them twice.

Breeding Districts.

From very early days different districts have made a name for themselves for producing hunters. The existence of a breeding establishment in Wales in the time of William II is the first recorded instance of a particular part of the country being known for its horses. In Nimrod's day, Shropshire horses were in high repute, and he gives as the reason that the Shropshire yeomen were always of the most sporting character, and that they were very fortunate in their stallions, especially one called the Hundred House Snap, full of the best blood known. Later on, the Druid was very enthusiastic about them, telling us

that they were generally long and low, and "so sweet and clean about the head" that "the Shropshire head" was one of the highest points of praise that a horse could be given. They were famous for the good condition they always showed, but, by the 1860's, Shropshire had become "rather short of hunter sires," perhaps because the Shropshire men were more particular both as to pedigree and to style than were, for instance, the Yorkshire men. There was then a saying that the large bodies and little heads came from Shropshire: little bodies and large heads from Yorkshire, the reason being, apparently, that Shropshire would have hunters and nothing else, whereas in Yorkshire, anything that fell short of coach standards could be docked and called a hunter.

About a hundred years ago there was a fashionable prejudice against riding mares in the hunting field, which, as Nimrod pointed out in an article in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, afterwards published in a volume called *The Horse and the Hound*, had a most injurious effect on breeding, as a great number of mares which might have made excellent hunters never found a market, and were sold for harness work. Consequently, there was so great a "scarcity of young horses likely to make hunters that were it not for those annually imported from Ireland the demand would far exceed the supply." Irish horses had begun to titillate the fancy, though not every one found their "buck-fencing, dainty heel-touch" methods easy, and, until the English demand gave them a fillip, Irish breeders were very careless, having been content to breed from any "great

jumping hunter," without regard to pedigree, stamina, or speed. The increased demand for Irish horses in England gave them their chance, however, and by the 1860's one English dealer imported five hundred a year, and found it well worth his while.

By the middle of that century, Lincolnshire and the Yorkshire wolds were bracketed with Shropshire as the great nurseries of hunters, though draining and the growth of plough land, in Lincolnshire especially, tended to reduce their numbers. Howden Fair was one of the great sale places then, and no one who remembers his George Borrow will forget the name of Horncastle. Young horses were bought at Howden Fair to be "made" for the big prices at Horncastle, and it is noteworthy that, in the Druid's time (1822-1870), hunting men scarcely ever bought from farmers, and the dealers had things pretty much their own way. He has an amusing tale of one old dealer who was much annoyed at having a horse returned to him by a lord, as being a roarer. As a final protest, he threatened two or three horses in the ribs until he made them grunt, and then gave his lordship a dig, with the expected result, and pronounced him to be the biggest roarer of the lot, and "Be out of the yard with you!"

Dealers.

In the middle of the century the great London dealer was Collins, and he was one of the biggest buyers at Horncastle, though, as he held shows of his own on the way south, at Newmarket and Barnet, a large proportion of his purchases never

got to London at all. Still, there were enough left to mark the coming of spring in Lambeth, for if the dwellers in Mount Street, where he had his repository, "were to lose sight of their almanacks and the swallows," Mr. Collins's endless strings of horses passing to their stables would be sign enough. It is noticeable that the Druid, writing of this seasonable sign, mentions the cobs and park hacks only, so, presumably, most of the hunters had been sold in the country on the way down.

A Mr. Joseph Anderson, another famous dealer, had stables in the Piccadilly dip, while at Knightsbridge was another who did extensive business with foreigners, including the Emperor of the French and the King of Sardinia.

But perhaps the most famous of all dealers in the last century was the great Mr. Tilbury, who began life as a wheelwright, and later on had a place in Mount Street, with a farm out at Elstree and afterwards one at Pinner. He was a bit of a character, and invented the carriage called after him, and was fond of doing a kind of trick driving, almost in the style of John Mytton. "His delight," says the Druid, "was to have two young things in a break or curricule, and drive them in and out of places and along thoroughfares which hardly any coachman, with the most metallic nerves, would have dared to essay." It was a time when "jobbing" for the season was in fashion. The Heythrop staff was mounted by Symonds of Oxford, and Soapey Sponge was not peculiar in the arrangements he made with Benjamin Buckram, who may or may not have been a libellous portrait of Mr. Tilbury himself, for Sponge, it may

be remembered, took an Edgware Road bus as far as it went, and then walked on into the country in the Elstree direction, to Buckram's "little independence," Scampley Farm. Tilbury's best-known contract was with the Hungarian Count Sandor, who spent a season at Melton. Tilbury kept the Count supplied with eight horses for the season, for £1000, a sum which covered, besides risk for the horses, every expense connected with their use, including turnpike payments. The horses and the Count gave one another a gay time, and the artist, Fernley, did a series of ten pictures of their adventures, of which perhaps the most amusing is that in which the Count, having got stuck with his horse, waist-deep in a sticky-bottomed stream, sits smoking a cigar to keep out the cold, and shouting for help, which was long in coming, owing to the difficulty in seeing where the cries came from, the Count apparently being well below the level of the bank. He must have been a good sportsman, for he himself commissioned Fernley to paint his mishaps, as well as a few triumphs, and carried them off to his Hungarian Castle as souvenirs. He was probably, also, a good advertisement for Tilbury, who, nevertheless, fell on evil days and died, a poor man, in 1860. His horses were never particularly handsome, and the Druid says that they were a kind of "dual purpose" proposition—what would not do for hunting would go in a coach or, like Buckram's "incurables," a bus.

The time between the Napoleonic Wars and the first Boer War seems generally to be accepted as having been the "golden age" of hunting, though

those who lived through those years never, naturally, thought so. It was a time of wealth, hunting was a fashionable craze, and there were plenty who thought, as some do to-day, that it is the price that makes the horse. "The more you asked them," said old Dick Christian, "the better they liked it," and he sold a horse for Mat Milton the dealer for £300 which was not worth £100. But it was at the end of a great run, when Dick had ridden two horses to a standstill, and been lucky enough to have made his exchanges unseen, and the three were all bays, exactly alike. There was, for a time, a curious fashion for having one or two horses which were practically indistinguishable from one another. Dick Christian and his three bays were perhaps the most notable, but there was a peculiar swell, "The Beau Brummell of the Pytchley," named Mr. Small. He had two black mares, perfect facsimiles of one another, both with cropped ears, and ridden in an unnecessary martingale, and indistinguishable except to a very careful eye.

Docking and Cropping.

Just as there were fashions in twin horses, and fashions in colour—one M.F.H. is said to have had over seventy chestnut horses in his stable at one time—so there have been changeable and recurrent fashions for docked tails, as there once was for cropped ears. Docking was said to strengthen the muscles of a horse's back, and was practised in Elizabethan times. The change of taste and fashion in the last century is oddly illustrated, as Captain Siltzer, in his *Story of British Sporting Prints* points

out, by the fact that, in the early prints of at least one artist—the Pytchley illustrator, Loraine Smith (1751-1835)—the horses are docked very short indeed, while in later prints, the tails grow longer and longer as the fashion changed.

The cropping short of a horse's ears was a barbarous and quite pointless vogue, and it is difficult to say when it began and when it fell out of general favour. Shakespeare knew it, though it was apparently not universal then, for, when Hotspur asks his servant: "Hath Butler brought those horses from the Sheriff?" and learns that one has just arrived, he adds: "What horse? A roan, a crop-ear, is it not?" Beckford, writing about 1780, mentions with satisfaction that it is going out of fashion, but there are two pictures of Jack Musters as a youngish man, about 1800, on a horse with cropped ears, though, in one of them, his companion's horse is not so mutilated.

Nosebands.

Another point that it is not easy to date is when nosebands were first used. It is difficult to find any illustration of the "classic" days which shows one, a very long-cheeked bit with sometimes a single, but usually a double rein, being almost universal. A Fernley print of the Sedgfield Hunt "Breaking Cover," of 1832, shows one man on a grey horse with a noseband, and a Leicestershire man who went to Canada some time in the '80's noticed that, though before he left there was never a noseband to be seen, when he returned some years later, there were a few sprinkled about.

But, if nosebands are of doubtful origin, we are on surer ground with the invention of the spring safety bar on saddles, for "Thormanby" says that Hugo Meynell (born 1759) once had a stable boy killed by being thrown and his foot caught in the leather, whereupon the butler set to work to discover some means of preventing such an accident from happening again, and hit upon the spring bar attachment. It is to be hoped that the butler was given a day now and then as a reward, for few ideas more useful and practical have ever been invented.

Roads and Railways.

When railways came in, the opinion was held that very soon there would be no more hunting and no travelling by road at all, and Surtees was one of the few men who saw their increase with favour, though even he deplored the consequent drainage of wealth into the towns. But the men who thought that had not visualised motor cars, though, as by "road travel" they meant riding and driving, their prophecy has almost come true. Their delight at being able to bowl along the new macadamised turnpikes at ten or more miles an hour would have been less exuberant if they had realised that this very improvement was the first step towards making it impossible to ride or drive in safety or ease on the "marble-like" surfaces they so much admired. No longer are horses bred for hunters with the idea that the failures can be turned into coach or carriage horses. No one, now, can console himself, like Benjamin Buckram, that he can, as a last resort, get rid of his "incorrigibles" by putting them into

harness. A riding horse, nowadays, must have at least the makings of a hunter in order to exist at all, for, in spite of the present popularity of riding schools and pony clubs, it is more than doubtful whether, if it were not for the distant prospect of hunting, even on the dimmest horizon, their popularity would be proof against the dangers and difficulties of the main roads. Riding holidays have a certain vogue just now, but tarred roads are pushing their way farther and farther among the country lanes, and making the problem of avoiding them more and more a game of skill. "A horse to ride" is a great companion, but one of the best parts of companionship is the sharing of difficulties and hazards, and nowhere can a horse and his rider get a better sympathy with one another than in the hunting field. The horse with bad road habits very seldom loses them. But a horse of any character seldom requires more than one sharp lesson out hunting to correct a fault. "Give him three or four bad falls over timber," was one hardy man's advice about a timber-shy horse, and anyone who has begun with a young, impetuous, ignorant hunter, shared in his salutary falls, sensed his increasing sensitiveness to experience, has his own mind and character enriched and deepened.

Horse and Rider.

Carters and ploughmen feel a very close attachment to the horses under their care, and may take the greatest pride in their strength, willingness, or beauty. But a good hunter, called upon twenty times in a good run for some quick decision, some

unexpected sleight of foot performance, shows something more than strength, speed, and willingness. By what instinct does a horse know better than his rider that a patch of boggy ground is not to be faced, or is within jumpable proportions, or may be safely cantered through? What prompts a horse to refuse a moderate ditch at one spot, and take it "sweet as an apple" a couple of yards farther up, where the landing proves, with not much difference in appearance, to be sounder? A man who once mistrusts a horse whom he knows not to be merely temperamental is asking for trouble, and usually gets it, and, in the same way, a horse who has learned to place perfect confidence in his rider can be made to do the most astonishing things. Nimrod has a tale of a Dr. Minster of Cheltenham, who laid a bet that he would make his horse jump something that no one else could. He took him out into the street, and put him, without any difficulty, over several fairly high, non-existent fences. The horse was blind, and the Doctor hunted him with such perfect understanding between them that there seemed to be no rift of doubt in either of their minds.

There is a similar tale told from the side of the horse. In this case the rider was so short-sighted as to be almost blind and, when crossing a park one day with hounds, complained bitterly that his horse had taken a strange freak of bucking and plunging unaccountably several times. The horse had been jumping the little park fences or hurdles as he came to them, which his rider could not see. There is also the very old tale of the too obsequious courtier, who, riding a horse famous for his docility and

jumping prowess, was asked by his monarch, as they rode together over a bridge, what he would do were he requested by the king to put his horse over the parapet. "This," was his answer, and, putting his horse at the wall, jumped into the river. The horse, it is said, would never take another jump for his master again.

Whether it is all memory or instinct, or whether a horse has some reasoning and reasonable powers akin to human, has not been certainly ascertained. But that there is some basis of understanding between man and horse, beyond the confines of horse flesh or human flesh, can scarcely be doubted. However distant the point of contact, there seems certainly to be some plane on which horse sense and common sense meet, and, without that contact, brought closer within reach by the habit of hunting than by anything else, mankind, at any rate, would be the poorer. Shakespeare, whom Professor Madden has shown to have been a hunting man, sensed this reciprocity of feeling when he wrote the sonnet: *How heavy do I journey on the way.*" Riding away from his friend, with a heavy heart, he remembers that:

"The beast that bears me, tired with my woe,
Plods dully on, to bear that weight in me,
As if by some instinct the wretch did know
His rider loved not speed, being made from
thee."

And he knew, too, that it was a more than bodily sympathy, for when, the flesh being weak, he jerked at the horse, his irritability had no answer.

“The bloody spur cannot provoke him on
That sometimes anger thrusts into his hide;
Which heavily he answers with a groan,
More sharp to me than spurring to his side.”

But then, Shakespeare knew everything, so how should he not know of the close affinity which can exist between the hunter and the man who rides him? “There is no secret,” says Surtees, “so close as that between a horse and his rider,” and there is no friendship so close, unquestioning and generous, as that which a horse can give, a rich and ungrudged gift, to the man who rides him with affection and understanding in the hunting field.

CHAPTER II

THE FOX

ORIGINALLY, the fox had no standing except as vermin, and, as such, was destroyed with as little thought as a rat. He was listed as one of the "beasts of chase" with the buck, doe, marten, and roe. The hare, wolf, hart, and wild boar were "beasts of hunting," though the distinction is not very evident. The fox was also one of the "beasts of stinking flight" as opposed to those of "sweet flight," but his powers were not made full use of for centuries. The "sweet flight" beasts seem to have been useful for food, the others merely for extinction.

Hunting was known in the very earliest days of our history, but the hare, and, above all, the stag, was the quarry for which the Royal Forests were kept, and, so far from hunting being a democratic sport, all privately owned dogs within ten miles of a Royal Forest were "lawed" or mutilated, by having a toe amputated or a knee cut, so that they could not pursue the King's deer.

Early Fox-catching.

Henry I, it is true (1100-1135), granted a charter to the citizens of London to hunt, but no thought of a fox was entertained. The only detail of this licensed hunt that has survived is the fact that the

Master was to be the Mayor. The first sign of an appreciation of the possible sporting value of the fox seems to have appeared at the end of the thirteenth century, when Edward I gave a licence to hunt fox "except in the fence month," and, though a month seems a short enough time for which to protect him, it was better than nothing. Edward himself, however, still seems to have looked on fox-killing in much the same light as rat-catching, for, though he had an establishment for fox-catching, it provided for only one horse, presumably to carry the nets and other tools necessary for his circumvention. King John had done better than this, for he once sent his huntsman, William Mallett, with forty foxhounds, six greyhounds, and six varlets, but still only one horse, to hunt fox in "our forest of Tréville," and, early in the fourteenth century, enough interest was being taken in fox-hunting to demand mention in a book called *The Art of Hunting*, written by Edward II's huntsman, Twici. He was primarily interested, however, in stag-hunting, and, indeed, it would have been difficult to have written much in a serious treatise on such a raggle-taggle, farm-yard affair as fox-chasing seems to have been at the end of the fourteenth century, when Chaucer described the pandemonium which ensued on the discovery of a fox making off with the farm-wife's favourite "Chanticleer." Without delay:

"The silly widow and her daughters two
Herden these hennys cry, and maken wo,
And out at doorës startē they anon
And said the fox toward the wood is gone,

And bare upon his back the cock away.
They crieden: 'Out! Harrow and wayleway!
Ha, ha! the fox!' and after him they ran,
And eke with stavës many another man.
Ran Coll our dog, and Talbot and Garland,
And Malkyn with a distaff in her hand.
Ran cow and calf and eke the very hogs,
So were they feared for barking of the dogs
And shouting of the men and women eke.
They ran (so) that they thought their heart
(would) break.
They yellenden as fiendes doon in helle:
The dokës (=ducks) criden as men would them
quell . . .
No maiden shoutes never half so shrill,
When that they woulden any Fleming kill,
As thilke day was made upon the fox.
Of brass they broughten hornes, and of box,
Of horn and bone in thich they blew and
powped.
And therewithal they schryked and they howped.
It seemed as that heven shouldë fall."

As a mixture of bee-swariming and rat-catching, this description has its good points, but, as fox-hunting, it is enough to make the chilliest enthusiast shudder.

Netting.

This primitive method of chasing foxes out of the yard was found not to be efficacious in keeping them down, and a system came into being of netting the sides of a copse and rattling the fox about with dogs

of some kind until he ran into the nets. Sometimes a few farmers would have a united day at this game, as they do at badger digging now, and where the farmers were not keen, a professional travelling fox-catcher, complete with nets and a few curs, would be called in, much as rat-catchers are at the present day. The use of nets, however, was restricted by licence, because of the danger that the precious deer might run into them and be injured or killed. Also, just as harriers may be used as a screen for a little fox-hunting nowadays, no doubt the fox-catchers occasionally made away with a deer "by mistake."

When nets were not used, the method was to put a couple or so of dogs—not more, in case they should run "chaos" or riot—into the cover, keeping one or two leashed greyhounds outside, ready to slip if the fox broke. The idea that he should be encouraged to break was so far from men's minds then, that it was the duty of every one who was there "to hack and hue him" back into cover again, for "an old fox, being well-breathed, is so formidable a chase" that hounds could never catch him.

Preservation.

The early Tudors seem to have been too busy to leave much in the way of hunting reports behind them, but there seems to have been some growing idea of preserving foxes, because, by Elizabeth's reign, it was an established practice. Probably—for she was fond of hunting—she had shown some anxiety about the state of her covers, for the chronicler Holinshed wrote to her that if it were not

for the preservation of foxes for the pleasure of gentlemen, they would be entirely exterminated. "So earnestly are the inhabitants bent to root him out," he wrote, "that, except it be to bear with the recreations of their superiors," they must have been "utterly destroyed many years ago."

It is in Elizabeth's reign that what was probably the first proper run ever recorded took place—a fourteen-mile point ending with a kill being mentioned, but unfortunately not described, by Sir Thomas Cockaine, a sportsman in the sixteenth century. It makes a good start off, and such a run would be very welcome to-day in the best of hunts.

Fox Shoots.

Although real hunting, more as we understand it now, was beginning to make headway, it was still a fairly popular pastime to shoot foxes with the cross-bow. A drag, or "trayne," would be laid, running past built-up "butts" or "standings," and the company would take pot-shots as the fox passed. This "trayne" was a carefully prepared concoction, of which the basis was a "skin of bacon" broiled and dipped into a sauce obtained by mutilating vixens and stewing the results. At that time, Randolph, Elizabeth's ambassador to Russia, had a secretary called Turberville, who apparently devoted his spare time at home to "hunting," and he gives a full description of this method of killing—or wounding—foxes, and says that they were also "taken with houndes, greyhoundes, nettes, and ginnes." Some of his reasons for enjoying hunting are rather curious. "The hunting of the Foxe," he

says, "is pleasant, for he maketh an excellent crye, because his sent is verie hote, and he never fleeth farre before the houndes . . . but holdeth the strongest coverts, and fleeth from the fields, as a Beaste which trusteth not in his legges nor yet in his strength."

From these days of Elizabeth onwards the face of the country was rapidly changing. People were settling down after the long troubles of the Middle Ages: the reshuffling of the aristocracy consequent on the Wars of the Roses had become an accomplished fact, and the "new nobility" was now almost indistinguishable from the old: agriculture was improving, and deforestation was in progress. Deer, consequently, became scarcer, and as, apparently, men must hunt, and a fox can live almost anywhere, foxes became more and more the main objective.

James I.

James I was a keen hunting man, and on his way south for his coronation, having stopped a night at Newark, hunted all the way down to Belvoir Castle, though this, and probably most of his hunting, was almost certainly for hare or deer. He apparently had a keen contempt for any other method of killing a fox than hunting him, for in some instructions as to the behaviour becoming a gentleman which he wrote for his son, he pours scorn on the idea of shooting and trapping.

Charles II.

During the Roundhead Wars there is little news of foxes, although the decrease among the red deer continued. When those troubles were over, and

Charles II safely on the throne, it appears that some of the country gentlemen had not been idle, for Sir Walter Gilbey quotes a letter written by a Sir William Thomas, M.P. for Sussex, announcing his intention of hunting fox on the next day at Eastbourne, and pointing out that "if there be not people to watch the cliffs and to be there about three o'clock in the morning to prevent their going down, I can do no good with them." Therefore Sir William Wilson—apparently it was to be a lawn meet at his house, Bourne Place—is desired, not only to have the cliffs watched, but "to stop the earths that are near you." "I will be there, God willing, by six o'clock in the morning."

This begins to look more like the real thing, though, as no exact date is given to the letter, the early hour may be due, not to a cub-hunting fixture, but to the necessity for getting away on a fox who had not yet digested his supper.

James II.

By James II's time the old hacking and hueing back into cover was over, and a Richard Blome wrote a book on hunting, in which he speaks of runs of from four to ten miles, ringing "from wood to wood, and sometimes endways for about twenty miles, trying all the earths he knows." Less is heard of hare, and much less of deer, and, by the beginning of the next century, the fox had really come into his own.

Eighteenth-century Conditions.

Although by the eighteenth century fox-hunting had definitely come to be recognised as a national

sport, the difficulties with which Masters and others who were interested had to contend are not always remembered. The foxes were there all right, and the intention of hunting them, but the methods were all undecided and very individual, guided by no established customary procedure, but being built up by a series of bitter or successful experiments. Foxes were fewer than they are nowadays, and both cover and food scarcer, so that the foxes knew and travelled over much wider districts. The condition of both horses and hounds was such that the unfortunate foxes were very seldom left to get their supper settled down in peace. More of them were walked to death than hurried, though a good many must have been chopped in their early morning sleep. As years went on, agriculture came to the fore, improvements were made, more and more land was brought to hand, with a consequent secret destruction of foxes, which were further decimated by the growth of game-preserving, and the flooding of estates with keepers who knew more ways than one both of getting rid of foxes and of having one ready when hounds should draw their preserves. The poverty-stricken state of the lowest of the labouring classes invited them to make a dishonest shilling or two when they could, and foxes were poached right and left, many a Master being driven to buy back some of his own, usually from a dealer, to replenish his blank covers. Fox-hunting had been found to open an opportunity for the excitement of hard riding, and, since the hard riders could not ride hard after nothing, the habit of putting down bag foxes, or of stocking a country

through a dealer, became fairly general, and some strange beasts appeared in the country.

Foreign Foxes.

Leadenhall was the great distributing centre, and over a thousand foxes a year were being sent out from there as late as the middle of last century. These were chiefly Dutch foxes, with bluff, bull heads, and the Quorn had forty brace of them put down, "very lengthy, with ears like donkeys, and very thick brushes." The Druid says that they were generally very good. French foxes had probably been imported before the French Revolution, but good hunting men disliked these "Frenchmen" as much as a good patriot disliked the real ones. They were said to be weak and cowardly creatures, with an apparently ineradicable tendency to curvature of the spine, which induced them to run in circles, and, when they bred among the local foxes, perpetuated a strain which never seemed to produce the good, straightforward points of old days. The Pytchley patronised this breed, and when they first came over, they were very long and narrow in the head, with long legs, but, by the middle of the last century, had become not very different from the indigenous kind.

The Belvoir once experimented with a queer lot of animals from Sardinia—it may be remembered that the King of Sardinia was supplied with horses by a London dealer—but they were more like wolves than foxes, and prowled round the houses, producing less general sport than local terror. Some were even imported from Russia, three brace going into Leicestershire, but they disappeared, and as their

shaggy, long-legged characteristics do not seem to have reproduced themselves, they probably did not like the climate.

Stocking a Country.

This determination to have foxes from never mind where had an amusing sequel for one southern hunt. A London dealer had been given an unlimited order to stock the country, and was so determined to give no opportunity for a possible change of mind that he sent down seventy-five brace in one day, coach after coach rolling up, from morning till night, laden with the crates.

More reasonable practices have succeeded this madness, and to-day, though foxes may be procured from some country that is not hunted over, there is a moderation observed dictated by experience and common sense. Scottish foxes sent to the south of England have been found, not unreasonably, to suffer from the long journey. Hill foxes, when transplanted to an open country, are apt to be ringers, while the great long-legged ones from the open countries have been found to run right away from hounds in an enclosed and difficult one. If one part of a country is short of foxes, the deficiency can often be supplied from wooded combs or cliffs near by, and cubs taken from these places, kept healthy for a time in good quarters, and then turned down and provided with rabbits until they have made themselves at home, will repay the care they have been given in the best possible way.

These little cubs can be extraordinarily fascinating, and sometimes become quite tame. Out of a dozen

or so kept for a time in the Master's stable in a certain hunt, one became so friendly that he would run, at a call of his name, and take his food, without fear, from his Master's hand, enjoying a gentle tug-of-war over a rabbit. When he was finally put down to fend for himself, he seemed very reluctant to leave his friends. Whether it was due to his own strength of character, or to a feeling among his fellows that, by his friendship with his human master, he had lost caste, he certainly ruled the roost in the stable, and none of the others dared to start his meal until Jimmie had satisfied himself. He is not alone in being a well-known character. For ten years the Belvoir hunted a fox known as Old Piebald, who gave them many a good run, and, when he was at length caught, was so tough that hounds could not break him up, and Will Goodall, who was at that time hunting the Belvoir, made a cap for himself out of the skin. Parson Templer of Stover, Jack Russell's friend, who made a practice of keeping a lot of foxes running on long chains in his yard until they were wanted, for many seasons hunted one called the Bold Dragoon, and doubtless most hunts have had, at one time or another, some such well-known character.

Habits of Foxes.

In some parts of the country, foxes are much given to lying up in trees, or to climbing them in times of stress. Shropshire foxes, especially, have been known to be very fond of this refuge, and three were once put down from the same tree. The American grey fox, however, as reported in a recent

number of the *Field*, rather outdoes his English red brother in this way, and will climb very high, running, squirrel-like, to the top of the tallest pines, while "the other Tom Smith," in his *Life of a Fox*, describes how a Craven fox went up an oak tree, and, when dislodged by a keeper, jumped a clear twenty-seven feet to the ground, and got away. As a rule, however, pollard willows are the most favoured haunts.

It is well known that a fox will sometimes be found lying on a little island of tufted rushes in the middle of a watery bog, probably feeling secure in the thought that he will be warned by the splashing of approaching enemies, and a badger's holt is often shared by a fox, Colonel Cook, in his *Observations on Fox-hunting*, recommending the settlement of a pair of badgers in any part of the country where new, strong, and healthy earths are wanted for the foxes.

The improved drainage of farm lands provided foxes with numberless additional refuges, and as the drains usually open on low-lying, water-logged land which chills scent, they often account for the temporary escape of a hunted fox. A fox has been known to make for such a drain, push his head in, and then run back on his foil, leaving the puzzled huntsman to wonder why his hounds are so determinedly asserting that he has gone to ground, though he cannot be found.

But drains, like rabbit-holes, have provided treacherous refuges to a hard-run, heated fox, for if he stays too long in such restricted quarters he will not only get cramp, but, often enough, by his own steam and sweat, be suffocated to death. If he is

marked to ground and left, on the land of an ungenerous farmer, his death, after hounds have been taken off, is a certainty, and in either case it is to the best interests of all concerned to dig him out and give him some kind of a chance.

Scent.

The knowledge and appreciation of the properties of scent forms, of course, part of the life-preserving attributes of a fox, but the greatest human authorities have to acknowledge that they know nothing certain about it. It undoubtedly varies, not only with climate, soil, and weather conditions, and from day to day, even from hour to hour, but also with different foxes, some of which seem to have a much stronger scent than others. A vixen in cub is well known to carry a scent which, as a rule, prevents hounds from running her as they would a normal fox, and, considering the alteration in her structure and nervous system at such a time, it is not surprising that the exudation from her glands should be of a distinctive quality. Although it appears that scent emanates from certain glands, little more can be asserted. When the pores of the feet are clogged from running over sticky ground such as wet plough, scent fails, and when a fox brushes through heather, there is a good, holding side-scent, conducted from his body through his coat. "Stonehenge" says that the quality varies with the hopes and fears of a hunted fox, and, originating in the anal glands, is stronger if he is hard pressed early in the run. Certain minutely differing conditions in the atmosphere must almost certainly have a varying

power of drawing out and either absorbing the scent or refusing it, thus leaving it, as it were, "in suspension," but it has never yet been ascertained under what conditions these results are obtained. It is said by some to be poor in a northerly or easterly wind; before a coming storm; when frost is giving; and in very hot weather. Others find that, over different soils, the same winds, coming over the sea, or drawing across a hilly country to a vale or vice versa, carry good scent. Hounds have been known to stream away as though tied to their fox into the teeth of a fierce hailstorm from the north, whereas most such storms effectually deaden all hope, and, on the two best days ever remembered in a west country hunt, the heat was such as almost to melt the tar off the roads. At the end of a winter's afternoon, when frost is beginning to fall again, it usually improves. When mist is close and hanging, scent is likely to be smothered, but a fog nearly always holds promise, and in a slight mist it often lies high, while, when a heat haze is swimming up from the ground, it usually carries the scent up out of reach with it. Countrymen will say that when cobwebs hang on the bents or the scabious that spreads a blue mist so softly over the early autumn marshes; or when last night's rain- or dew-drops hang in the morning hedges, scent will be poor: Beckford, that a "blue haze" is bad. According to some, when the stars overnight are very bright and close, and the "planets were squz against the moon," there is no hope. When sound carries well, as though through a hollow air; when hounds come out of kennel smelling unusually strong, scent may

be expected to be good, as also after a wet night. If hounds roll at the meet, it may be taken as a sign of anything you please. The *Field* once advanced the suggestion that "a long course of weather, uniform in temperature, mild and equable" was all in favour, but Mr. H. O. Nethercote, drawing on fifty years of experience with the Pytchley, holds the contrary opinion, that a change of weather helps, and that some frost and snow is needed "to sweeten the ground." Probably no one theory is infallibly right or invariably wrong. If every Master could produce a carefully kept record of weather conditions from hour to hour, of the varying types of soil hunted over in the course of every run, and of the apparent state of scent, for a period of half a century, and if these records could then be examined and collated by a meteorologist, an anatomist, and an expert on soils, perhaps some definitely reliable deductions might be drawn. But, even then, it is doubtful whether much advantage could be taken of such knowledge, or whether there would be much more enjoyment to be got out of hunting, though the numbers at a meet might well be regulated if, on the fixture cards, were added the words: "Scent will be good," or, "Indifferent scent expected."

And it is this unpredictable, elusive quality which makes the link between hounds and their fox, hunting being the matching of the same natural mystery as given off by the quarry against its perception by the pack. Too many people who know nothing whatever of hunting, imagine that hounds are urged on by the huntsman, driven to him by his assiduous "whips," and the fox tortured, mentally

and physically, by his human pursuers, who yet, in ordinary life, are as kind-hearted and merciful as their critics. Whereas, a good huntsman leaves his hounds alone till the last possible moment, and then only intervenes to prompt them in a difficulty. Throughout practically the whole of a run, it is a case of hounds versus fox only, and, as Beckford says, the highest praise that can accrue to a huntsman, at the end of a long and successful run, is to be told that he might as well have been at home in bed. The fox, depending for his existence very largely on his own knowledge of scenting conditions, knows well enough on which days scent is good enough to make delay dangerous for him, and on which days he can afford to dally. There are days when he gets away as fast and as straight as he can, and this may pretty certainly be taken to be a sign that scent is unusually good. So confident is he of his safety on others, that eye-witnesses have seen a fox snatch up a fowl in passing, quarrel with a cat, and even stop and mate, or try to mate, with a vixen who crossed his path during a run. These, and other similar, well-authenticated anecdotes, should do something to quash the sentimental idea that, as long as hounds are running, and on unlucky days, long afterwards, a fox is in such a state of panic as a human being, endowed with the purely human attribute of imagination, would probably feel under the same circumstances.

Fear and Foxes.

In some animals, if not in all, sudden flight is a direct physical reaction to fright, the heart being

adapted to translate into instant muscular effort the shock of unexpectedly threatening danger received by the nerves. As Douglas Gordon points out, in an excellent book on wild life on Dartmoor, if those who condemn fox-hunting because of its "cruelty" were consistent, they would refrain from scaring the birds from their fruit bushes, for the bird shows a frenzy of fear which, if he had imagination or a reconstructive memory, must effectually forbid him ever exposing himself to like danger again. Yet, in five minutes, he will be back at the currants as though nothing had happened. A season or two ago, a fox slipped out of a wooded bottom through which hounds were drawing. His exit might, of course, be described as a panic-stricken flight. He made it obvious, however, that he was only taking precautions. Trotting up the slope above, he sat, for several minutes, in sight of all the riders, in the middle of a field, his brush curled comfortably round his feet, interestedly watching to see what was going on down below. Then, with an "easy, listening kind of gait," he loped away and lay in a hedge until hounds began to speak. Anyone who has seen, half-way through a run, a fox striding easily and unconcernedly away, with hounds less than a couple of fields behind him, might well think he was some other than the hunted fox, and only intent on some private business of his own. On a bad scenting day, his nonchalance is almost impertinent, and on days when scent is good, and he finds that he is in for a long chase, it seems far more reasonable to suppose that he is driven on by a continuance of the protective physical reaction than by the haunting image

of what will happen to him if he is caught, for the simple reason that, until he has been caught, he does not know. Danger and the threat of danger he is perpetually avoiding, and with his earliest nourishment has imbibed a wholesome mistrust of the unknown. But since (except in the case of a frayed nervous system) panic fear, with human beings, is knowledge, either taught or acquired by experience, quickened by imagination, it cannot but be a distortion of sympathy into the sentimental pathetic fallacy which prompts the many easy and (to borrow an excellent coin from George Meredith's mint) "humanitimity" pleas for "mercy" to the "poor, eye-glazed, mouth-foaming little fox."

He is, in reality, in hunting countries, perhaps the most carefully protected wild animal existing. His whereabouts, his litters of cubs, are known and scrupulously cared for, and when he is hunted, his own natural powers of speed and smell are pitted against the same gifts in the hounds. He has, in addition, the advantage of being smaller and more nimble, able to slip through thick undergrowth which slows up the hounds. Occasionally, when running through an unknown gorse, he will take for a time to the top of the bushes, if he finds the paths and tracks below are too unfamiliar, and a fox has been seen to disguise his own scent by running over the backs of a flock of sheep. In flinty country, too, as the Dorset fox in Tom Smith's book points out, the advantage is with the fox, who is not only lighter on his feet, but can pick his way, whereas hounds, having to hunt a scent, cannot spare the attention which would enable them to save their feet.

Life of a Fox.

Most litters of cubs are born within a week or two one side or the other of Lady Day, and for about ten days are blind, this being a natural protection against any desire to stray while their strength is still insufficient to bring them home again. After about six weeks, they may begin to eat rabbits and birds, killed and broken up by their mother. By the time they are a couple of months old, they can kill for themselves, under the vixen's supervision, and, by June or July, are beginning to hunt and roam independently. The sire seldom or never helps to feed them, so long as the dam is there to do it, but it is certain that he will play with his cubs. The men from a certain kennel went to the cliffs one evening to secure a litter which was in danger from the farmer, and which would also be more useful in a rather sparsely stocked part of the country. Looking over the edge of the cliff, they saw three or four cubs, a vixen, and an old dog fox playing together on a ledge a little way down. The vixen, like most good mothers, was looking quietly on, while the cubs took it in turns to have a ride on the old one's back. A prettier scene could hardly be imagined, and if it had not been that the farmer would undoubtedly have destroyed them, the family would probably have been left undisturbed.

The natural life of a fox is not very long. Seven or eight years is perhaps a liberal estimate, for if they escape all dangers of hounds and traps, of poison and a chance gun, they grow mangy and weak, unable to take proper exercise, and their sharpness

of tooth, eye, and cunning deserts them. Tom Smith writes of one who was known to live for eighteen years, but that was in captivity. While he lives, a fox must enjoy a very good life, and certainly a more blameless one than he is often credited with. If farmers will not shut their poultry in at night, they must expect to lose a few, though a fox will not usually rob very close to home. Rats, rabbits, beetles, mice and moles, form the greater part of his fare, and he will not say no to a crippled lamb, though not all cases of lamb-killing are justifiably attributed to him. A certain farmer was sending in bitter complaints and large claims for lambs, which, he asserted, had been killed by foxes. The kennel-man, who had a shrewd suspicion as to the culprit, put out a poisoned lamb, and the farmer's own dog was unmasked. Neither are all the half-eaten, half-buried birds and hares sometimes unearthed by a keeper's dog after a big shoot altogether the work of foxes, which must find many a wounded one, and take such gifts as are sent them.

No doubt a fox does damage: no doubt he is, during the season, a hunted animal. But poison and traps lead to lingering sickness, mange, and starvation, while a gun is by no means infallible. If it were not for hunting, a fox would find every man's hand against him all the year round, armed with those weapons against which he has no defence, and though it may be questioned by some whether any life be worth living, if the answer is in the affirmative at all, a fox takes the gift of life conditionally on the acceptance of its one chief attendant danger, for

were that withdrawn, he would have no chance of any life at all.

He may have entered history as vermin: he may, to-day, be labelled "varmint": but he owes all his life to those who hunt him, and, in return, they receive from him the gifts of healthy pleasure and exercise, the cementing of friendliness between all kinds and classes of people, and, best of all, the occasion for obtaining a close intimacy with the country-side, and a friendship and sympathy with horse and hound, without which all life would be a much poorer affair.

CHAPTER III

ON HOUNDS

Hunting Trojans.

IT has been established on presumably good authority that the foxhound was not in existence before the Flood, for as Parson Jack Russell said, the fact that a brace of foxes came out of the Ark proves that no foxhounds could have been taken into it. But that there were hounds of a kind in the world very early has been proved by one John of Monmouth, a historian who, according to Turberville, an Elizabethan writer, records that Brutus, the grandson of Æneas, was a great hunter, who, in consequence of accidentally killing his father when hunting, fled from Italy, and led an expedition to rescue some Trojans who were still held prisoner by the Greeks. The rescue accomplished, they all sailed to Brittany with "a great number of hounds and greyhounds," and four years later crossed to Totnes, where they conquered giants, and presumably left some hounds in the country before returning to France.

Old French Hounds.

The French at that time were using a famous strain of "White Hounds," which originally came from Barbary. There is no doubt about this, because

Turberville had his information from an old mariner who had been to Barbary, and seen the king hunting there "at force," *i.e.* in the open, and "all the houndes of his kennell were whyte," and "all the dogges of the countrie were such also." This circumstantial evidence may be the more readily believed in that the mariner's name has been preserved. It was Alfonse.

As these French hounds appear to be the ancestors of our own kind, it is interesting to find that they were all descended from one called Souyhard, who was given by a "pore gentleman" to the king, who, however, loved dun hounds better, and gave him away into Normandy, where he was extensively bred from. His strain came back to the King's kennel, the Princess Anne having sent a bitch to him and got, among others, Miraud, Meigrett, Marteau, and Hoyse, "the good bitche." These the King "reinforced" by using a fallow dog, Ingrauld, and a white one, Barraude, which was a present to him from the "Queen of Scottes," showing that the ancient alliance between those two countries had a more human foundation than mere politics.

Talbot Hounds.

Having thus set their kennel in order, the Normans then came over and conquered England, and must have brought hounds with them. The most celebrated blood was that of the Talbots, bred in St. Hubert's monastery in the Ardennes, and apparently of two distinct strains, Black and White. The "Great White Hound" was not necessarily white, but very large and courageous and speedy, of

a greyhound-like build, running mostly by sight until crossed with the Normandy strain, which, though slow, had very good noses. The Black Talbots were heavier and more of the bloodhound type, and it was probably these which predominated at the Conquest and developed into the deep-mouthed, southern hounds, so invaluable as "lymers" or tufters, for unkennelling a fox or harbouring a deer.

Southern Hounds

This type seems to have lingered in France until Surtees' time, for he writes of a day he had with a pack near Boulogne, where he saw "twelve or fourteen couple of what I presume would be called Old Southern Hounds, some nineteen or twenty inches high, long in body, deep in chest, stout-boned, large and heavy in the head, dew-lapped, with long, sweeping ears—slow but persevering. They were white . . . with large ticks, and seemed to incline towards the blue-mottle."

These southern hounds were largely used for stag-hunting, but there were also "bertelottes," a kind of small beagle probably, which would hunt "all game," while, in the more open country in the north, were "gaze hounds," which were "light, nimble, swift, and slender," and hunted, at any rate in the early days, by sight only.

"Northern" Hounds.

This northern strain of gallopers developed later into what were known as the "Northern Beagle" and the "Ribble" hound, a "low and swift" hound used, by Elizabeth's time, definitely for fox, and

they would draw as well as hunt. The fourteen-mile point described by Cockaine in the 1590's must have been accomplished by a kind of foxhound hunting by scent, as greyhounds, coursing, would assuredly have run into their fox much sooner.

The northern, "sharp-nosed" strain predominated for a very long time, at any rate in the more open countries, and probably accounts for the smaller, sharper-headed hounds seen in old pictures as late as the early nineteenth century. Too much southern blood, with which they were occasionally crossed, did not do for the faster countries, and it was gradually realised, even in the south, that these heavy, slow hounds had their disadvantages, for they were so heavy and clumsy that they had to be helped over the ditches and walls, otherwise they would, literally, "sit" on the scent and howl for help. With the increase of hedges when enclosing began to alter and open the face of the country, this disadvantage became still more marked, and the purely southern hound was bound to die out for fox-hunting purposes. Gervase Markham, in James I's reign, advocated keeping to a definite breeding plan according to the country to be hunted over, advising the slow, heavy hound for "most woodland and mountainous countries," where it would be difficult to keep with a fast pack, and the light, slender, nimble ones for the more open north.

It was by then generally expected that the same hounds, in the north at any rate, should both find and kill their fox, and by Charles II's reign this idea was more prevalent over the whole country. It is curious to find that, when Turberville wrote, about

1575, hounds would not break up their fox, and the huntsman had to carry bread with which to reward them. A century later they would, but there is no record of how or why they acquired the taste.

These two chief breeds—the speedy “Northern Beagle” and the good-nosed southern hound—seem to have been definitely crossed about 1686, to result, in time, in something on which more modern breeders could profitably work, though it was said to produce at first the full merits of neither, and to necessitate the slow method of dragging up to a fox and surprising him asleep, with his supper undigested. The slow hounds thus procured suited the leisurely style of riding then in fashion well enough, though in Beckford’s time there seems to have been a lack of good scenting power, and development was made more difficult by the insistence of each Master on sticking to his own prejudice, and the jealousy which prevented an interchange of experience.

Experiments in Breeding.

As Sir Walter Gilbey says, the true foxhound, as we understand the term, had not yet arrived. There were innumerable breeds with which to experiment—staghounds, indiscriminate “harriers” and beagles, the unsatisfactory northern and southern cross, and though Beckford says that “it is the judicious cross that makes the pack complete,” the judicious cross was difficult to discover. To-day we cross with some particular object in view, but for a long time it was chiefly a matter of experiment, just to see what would happen. Beckford mentions a case in which a Newfoundland bitch was used, with the

result that may be imagined, and it has generally been decided that such very wide and experimental crosses are not worth trying. A harrier touch may correct some scenting defect, but it has been found to result in a certain amount of "tying" on scent, or "spinning," as it has been aptly named, harrier blood being very persistent in trying for the maze-like line to which it has been accustomed. Pointers were crossed at one time to improve the pointer, but "the stock is good for nothing," and pointer blood introduced into a foxhound kennel tends to make the hounds sit and yowl with delight while awaiting developments. As late as the 1890's, a bloodhound strain was introduced into the Braes of Derwent, for the sake of the nose in the woodlands, but the consequent propensity to dwell made it unsatisfactory. Before this, bloodhounds had been brought into North Warwickshire in rather a curious way. Squire George Forester, of Willey Park, Shropshire, had given up keeping hounds, and the farmers ran a trencher-fed pack. Deer had apparently been straying from the park, and some bloodhounds were brought to hunt them, and also used occasionally for fox. Then, according to Mr. Vyner, the Squire's great-nephew, Lord Forester, the friend of the hard-riding Childe, crossed some bitches with these bloodhounds, but he does not say what effect this had, merely that their descendants were hunting as late as 1828. Possibly the idea was a purely experimental one, but it may have had its roots in some particular bias towards heavy, slow hounds of supreme scenting powers, for personal fancy still has a strong influence on hound breeding.

For a great many years almost every conceivable cross was experimented with, at first to produce something like a good, definite type for the new sport of hunting fox only, and then to improve on it. If the first deliberate cross to this end was that between a northern beagle and a southern hound about 1686, by 1733 there was a great interchange of blood all over the country, a hound named Luther being in that year sent from the Badsworth to the Duke of Monmouth's old kennel in Sussex, with a pedigree drawing from at least seven different kennels in various parts of the country. By 1746 hound lists were being produced, that of the Brocklesby dating from that year, and that a definite type was getting to be known and recognised is suggested by the fact that the Vine, early in the nineteenth century, were said to be of an old-fashioned, out-of-date type, "rough and sour" about the muzzle, and rough with a roughness that was not Welsh but a legacy from the old southern hound.

Hound Trials.

An increased interest in hunting, and a general speeding up of methods, led to an increased demand for hounds and for a superior turn of speed in the eighteenth century. A betting interest in speedy hounds began before that, for, in 1762, there was a great match at Newmarket between two couple of Meynell's and two couple of Mr. Smith Barry's, of Cheshire, the latter winning a four and a half mile race in eight minutes. They had been carefully fed on oatmeal, pigs' trotters, and milk, while Meynell's

were said to be trained on legs of mutton. The winner, Bluecap, was honourably buried near the kennels when he died, and an inn near-by named after him.

These hound matches at one time had a great popularity, and the racing hounds were kept and probably bred for this alone. They became very clever at it, and, on one occasion, showed themselves rather too clever, being beaten by plain honesty. The racing hounds had learned that the drag they were running usually ended where the crowd stood to see the finish, and they developed a habit of running straight for the crowd instead of working out the line. A certain pack was returning to kennels one afternoon early in the last century, and saw some village sports in progress, including a hound-trail. On the spur of the moment they entered a hound called Mountain, which faithfully kept the line, while the professional racers, as soon as they sighted the crowd, simply ran for it. Unfortunately for them, on this occasion, the crowd had gathered on a hill-top, whence they could get a good view of the course, which ended at the foot of the hill, and Mountain, being a worker, and not a professional, stuck to it and won.

These trials may have originated as an outlet for good hounds which were too fast for the rest of the pack, and which the Master was unwilling to draft. It was an old usage to "trash" an unusually fast hound, making him trail a long strap, or "trash," from a collar. Bluecap is shown so trashed in a painting, and Assheton Smith (1776-1858) handicapped a hound called Manager in this way.

Beckford writes of too speedy hounds being hunted in a weighted collar, and another method of checking them was to over-feed them.

Increase of Speed.

But the time was coming when it was not enough to trash an extra speedy hound, but when the pace of the whole pack must be brought up to the level of the fastest. Childe, of Kinlet Hall (b. 1756), may have been the first to introduce hard riding, but the temper of the times was ripening for it, and, before long, steeplechasing rather than hunting superseded the old methods of jogging along on a slow, unclipped half-bred sort of horse in order to watch hound-work. With better mounted riders, out for a fast thing, hounds had to develop a much higher turn of speed in order to escape from the galloping field, so that the thing ran in a circle. Fast horses brought faster hounds: faster hounds demanded still faster horses to live with them. One result of this passion for speed was the loss of a lot of music and scenting power, and the necessity of finding a cross that would restore these without diminishing the very necessary pace.

Welsh Hounds.

Resort was had to Welsh blood, which is perhaps more naturally musical than any other, with, in addition, the exceptionally fine nose that comes from being left very much to its own devices, and not unduly chased by an over-eager field. For this purpose Welsh blood was introduced into a number of kennels, perhaps for the first time rather more than half a

century ago, when the speed craze was at its most menacing, and, as yet, no efficient answer had been found to it. In 1895, Will Goodall, in a letter reproduced in the *Field* in 1920, wrote of the Welsh blood that it was "a sort I am very fond of, and feel sure that before long we English houndsmen will have to come back to this sort for nose and tongue." That the Welsh cross became especially popular just after the War was probably due to the necessity for building up depleted packs quickly, and for this the good-nosed, fast, and very musical Welsh hounds proved an invaluable investment. It has been suggested that the strain originated in France, where there was a breed of Bresse hounds, shaggy and yellow-coated, and that they were known in England in the early fourteenth century is clear from a letter written by Edward III, when Prince of Wales, to the French King, with a present of "some of our bow-legged hare-hounds of Wales." In the same century, the Bishop of Worcester complained to the Bishop of St. David's about a delay in the arrival of six couple of—presumably—Welsh hounds that had been promised. Much earlier Athelstane had imposed a yearly tribute on Wales, which included "sharp-scented dogs fit for hunting of wild beasts," so that it would appear that the true Welsh hound—originally a harrier only—is of very ancient descent.

It is interesting to find a perfect example of the result of the transference of a good pack of hounds from a less fashionable country to the galloping fields of Leicestershire. When Ralph Lambton had to give up his hounds, which had been hunting well in the quiet, keen atmosphere of Durham, they were

sold to Lord Suffield, and taken into Leicestershire, where they killed very few foxes and were "thought to be a regular *bad* lot." "Firstly they run mute . . . secondly they never think of putting their heads down at all for the first three fields, and they overrun the scent for two fields, and they appear to be uncommon slack in trying to recover it." Mr. Francis Grant, who wrote, in confidence, to Surtees, to find an explanation of these shortcomings, affirms that "they are not over-ridden," but adds: "Their huntsman is a little wild, like themselves; the moment they throw up he begins casting right and left, the whips flogging, giving them no time to make their own cast. They have not killed one fox this season after a run."

Surtees had already drawn his own conclusions, from a knowledge of the methods followed in their new country. "They were strange to the country," he wrote, "and the servants were strange to them; and never having been used to the pressure of a crowd, they were constantly driven beyond the scent. Added to this, the huntsman, Charles Treadwell, a first-rate man, now with the Bramham, was ordered always to cast at a canter, and never to cast back."

What chance had the hounds under such conditions? Fortunately for their reputation, and that of their late Master, and to the great satisfaction of those who knew what they could do, they soon afterwards went to the Border, where, "over the fine wild plains of Northumberland, they quickly recovered their character, and for three successive seasons showed uncommon sport. At the end of

that time they were incorporated with those of Lord Elcho, and the countries united form one of the finest hunts in the Kingdom."

A plainer case of the disastrous effects of too much haste could not be desired, and we are indebted to Mr. E. D. Cuming (*Robert Smith Surtees*, 1924) for this invaluable piece of evidence.

Superstitions about Colour.

Just as there were superstitions and country beliefs about horses and their colour, so there were about hounds, and perhaps these prejudices have lasted longer. To-day, some kennels will refuse a lemon-pye, or a dark hound, or one with his stern turned over his back, be he never so good. In the old days the self-coloured hounds were thought to be the best, except, perhaps, in the hill countries, where light hounds must always have shown up well. All black was rare, but very good, but a hound spotted with black was not good, and supposed to go wrong in the feet. There was anciently a French fallow-coloured strain, said to come from the "houndes of the Admirall d'Anybault," and they were considered hardy and good, especially when showing a white spot or collar. Dun hounds, dark on the back and mottled with black on the legs, were said to be excellent, and there were "not many badde dunne houndes to be seen," though the lighter shades were poorly esteemed. The fallow were for princes and not for "meane gentlemen," as they were very good at hart, but not so useful for mixed game, hare, or "small chaces."

The best whelps were those which sucked nearest the heart of their dam; which had black-roofed mouths or large, long, thick ears, with the hair underneath "hard and great." The hairs under the throat were carefully counted. They must be like hogs' bristles, and, if odd, the whelps were considered good; if even, bad; and a red-roofed mouth was a bad sign. The same care which selected the whelps followed them through their working life.

Old Customs.

A handful of vinegar rubbed on a hound's nose was held to improve his scenting powers, and there was in use at one time a tremendous ointment for their feet, compounded of eggs, vinegar, pitch, and soot, beaten up and warmed, though the simplicity of salt and water was not despised. The spaying of bitches was fairly common at one time, "the other Tom Smith" (b. 1790) being a great advocate of this treatment, on the grounds that they thereby became faster and better in every way, ate less, and did more work, thus making the cheapest kind of pack to keep. Vaccination for distemper was first tried by Mr. Pawlett in Hampshire in the early part of the nineteenth century, but was successful only in the first year.

So fashion and superstition left their mark on the foxhounds of old days. If superstition has died, fashion still has a lot to answer for. Some years ago a craze sprang up for bone. Hounds must have so much bone that their legs might have supported a young steer. At the same time, instead of being "straight as a line," they were bred so over at the

knee as to look deformed, and the tight, round cat-foot, which some still admire, was carried to excess. It was a fashion, and has, fortunately, had its day, and the rather more open, natural foot and straight leg have regained the favour experience demands.

The system of naming hounds has never changed very much, and it is interesting to see how old some present-day names are. Few names survive from the Middle Ages, but Shakespeare gives us Mountain, Fury, Tyrant, Ringwood, Echo, Silver, Merriman, and Bellman. And what Master has not disputed with his men about the relative merits of the hounds, all through the ages? Hear the Elizabethans at it:

“Saw’st not, boy, how Silver made it good
At the hedge corner, in the coldest fault?
I would not lose the dog for twenty pounds.”

To which the “first huntsman” replies:

“Why, Bellman is as good as he, my lord . . .
Trust me, I take him for the better dog.”

But the Master will not have it so:

“Thou art a fool: if Echo were as fleet
I would esteem him worth a dozen such.”

Hound Shows.

It was probably this championship of favourite hounds, together with a growing desire to see the results of neighbouring breeding experiments at

leisure, which led to the establishment of hound and puppy shows. The first real hound show seems to have been arranged in the 1820's by John Warde, of Squerries, Kent, and to have been a private affair between friends. They were very keen, and we are told that hounds would be brought into the house afterwards, to be judged all over again at the dining-table. The difficulty of transport was probably the chief reason why such shows did not become a regular feature of the hunting year for some time; but, with an increased demand for hounds, it became necessary to breed much more extensively, and, therefore, to find fresh walks for the puppies, and the prospective walkers needed, perhaps, at first, a little cajolery in the form of a possible prize. Gone were the old days when a Master could follow Gervase Markham's seventeenth-century advice to "let your Cook bring up your best whelps, and your Dairy maid your second best," dividing the rest among friends and tenants "according to the love you possess in the country."

It is only right that a puppy-walker should see some reward in a tangible form for his trouble, and perhaps the most really important function in a hunting country is the puppy show, when past trials and troubles are forgotten in pride at the result. When the Master has the knack of taking the hearts of his walkers on his tongue, the kindly burden comes to be looked on as a privileged pleasure. "A puppy comes to you," said a West Country Master at his puppy show recently, "all tummy and little else; eats everything he can see, wriggles his way into Missus's heart, and takes possession of Maister's

arm-chair by the fire" . . . and though this, and worse, may be true, in that country, at any rate, there is a demand for puppies to walk greater than the supply.

A well-treated puppy will remember his summer home for years, and, when nearing the place, perhaps during early summer morning exercise, will suddenly put his nose to the ground a couple of hundred yards from the gate, and fairly hunt his old memories to ground in the heart of the family. A puppy walker who also hunts, shares, in some degree, the pleasures of a Master, for there can be few keener delights than to see his own puppy, now, perhaps, a second or third season hound, pick out the line at a check, establish it to his own satisfaction, take it right through the still hesitant pack, and then gallop away, triumphantly calling the rest after him.

It is for this end that men have been breeding hounds since our history began. Through all the troubled times of conquest, wars, and internal upheavals, the problem of how to perfect hounds for the particular quarry they must hunt has proved a refuge for tired and worried minds, offered a never-ending source of relaxation, and the satisfaction that comes from knowing that the relaxation is very far removed from idleness, and confers benefits beyond the reach of calculation.

From heavy, deep-mouthed, southern hounds, through the snipey, slender, northern kind, with here a dash of Welsh, there some of the old blue-mottle harrier—of which there was a whole kennel kept near Croydon early in the nineteenth century—elsewhere a pointer or a Newfoundland cross, a

steady progress had been made to get as near perfection as possible, with the results that we see to-day. The labour is not all lost, neither can it all be on the surface. With the blood of generations of keen hound men in our veins to-day, inheriting some strain, even of the slightest, of their patience and perseverance through hope and disappointment, even those who are merely passers-by have gained some indescribable benefit from this continuous interest, which is as much a part of our inheritance as the history that has built up the intangible entity which is England. And, if the most pedestrian and town-soaked mind can get a momentary thrill from the sight or even the thought of hunting, how much more does the Master or huntsman get, when, at a lift of his arm and a cheerful "Tootle-oo!" the pack accept his will for theirs, take their cue from him, and, trusting him with the implicit trust born of experience, turn and make good the puzzled line?

And, from the Master to the hunt servants, and through their families and friends, the same spell holds. An old man who lives in a cottage not far from the kennels has been bedridden for years in a tiny room. From his bed he can hear the hounds "sing" in the kennel. He listens for the horn as hounds leave the kennel on a hunting morning, and again when they return in the evening, and it is largely the expectation of hearing the kennel-man's report twice a week that still keeps the spirit in life for him.

An old man was breaking stones on a foggy day when hounds were meeting not far away. A rider

passing to the meet stopped to ask his opinion as to whether the fog would lift. "I hope it does," was his answer. "Reckon hounds may run this way, and it's my delight to see them run over the moor."

Neither of these men has ever hunted in his life: neither has ever been in a position to walk a puppy or to take any active share in the hunting: yet their hearts are with the hounds, and they talk now and then of the one or two names they may chance to know, sharing, at a great distance, in the pride and pleasure of the hound-work—for they have little interest in the riding—and dipping thereby into at least the shallows of the stream which has flowed through the whole race for so many centuries.

If this is the feeling among people who have no personal contact with hunting, how much more is there for the hunting man who is fond of hounds? There are those who hunt for the joy of the galloping and jumping: others who like to consider themselves hunting people, and do little more than appear, all gloriously appavelled, at the meets. They have their pleasure. There are also plenty of people who start hunting with the idea that the whole thing is really a question of riding, and hounds a regrettably necessary obstruction. Gradually a perception of the beauty of hound-work creeps into the business, and those who know the hounds in kennel during the summer, visit them at their walks, ride with them to exercise in the freshness of an early August morning, and so, when hunting starts again, know each hound as a personality, get a full savour out of even a blank day, which is compensation for most of the troubles of everyday life.

CHAPTER IV

ANCIENT DAYS

FOX-HUNTING in the earliest days was not at all what we understand it to mean to-day. It has been shown in an earlier chapter that for a very long time it was much more like rat-catching, and foxes were treated entirely as vermin, to be destroyed by any means which presented itself. A few curs, the netting of the woods, and the thing was done. Foxes are specially mentioned with wolves, cats, and "all vermin," as to be destroyed as one of the conditions of holding land in the reign of Henry III, but by Edward I's time some difference was made, and foxes, hares, and cats were protected during the "fence month"—the first sign that a "close season" was to be observed.

Coursing a Fox.

Right up to the time of the last of the Tudors the rat-catching methods were followed, and though by then foxes were definitely being preserved for the sport it had been found they could show, it was not at all the sport we know. These preserved foxes were usually, when they broke from the covers, coursed by greyhounds, relays of which were held ready to be slipped along the line the fox might be expected to take. As there was then a large wood or forest every few yards, this must have been fairly

easy to judge, and there was very little hunting in the open with "running hounds." As late as 1531, a Sir Thomas Elyot writes that he "will not dispraise the hunting of the fox with running hounds, but it is not to be compared with the other hunting in commoditie of exercise"—*i.e.* to the woodland chases, for which hounds were chosen entirely on account of their slowness, good noses, and music.

"Stop" Hounds.

"Compose your kennel of the biggest and slowest dogs you can get," wrote Gervase Markham in James I's reign, "respecting only cunning hunting and depth of mouth; and this kennel (see) that you make so staunch and obedient to your command, that when they are upon the hottest scent, or in the earnestness of the chase, step before them and cast your hunting pole but before their eyes, they shall suddenly stop and hunt after you in full cry; with no more speed than it shall take you to lead them; and when you please to let them go before you again, to pass away with the scent roundly and without stay."

Hunting, whether on foot or not, in the big woods and forests then covering the country, must necessarily have been slow work, and obviously sportsmen of those days did not see the fun of having hounds which ran right away from them.

Hounds were still trained to this pitch of handiness less than a hundred years ago. Parson Templer, of Stover, Devon, Jack Russell's friend, used to do exactly the same thing, stopping his hounds with his "stop-stick" and picking up his fox from under their noses, to be kept for another day. So steady

was his pack that, when he was turning down a bagman, he would stand, watch in hand, until he thought the fox had got a fair start. As he clicked his watch shut, hounds were off, and one old one used to sit, his eye on the watch, and, at the first movement of Templer's hand to shut it, would be away like a shot.

A Choir of Hounds.

It was the prevalence of woodlands that led the old hunting men to set such store by a musical pack, for even to-day more than half the beauty of a woodland hunt lies in the music, and a mute pack would be useless. Considerable care was taken to procure not only plenty of noise but a well-balanced choir. As Markham says: "If you would have your kennel for sweetness of cry, then you must compound it of some large dogs that have deep, solemn mouths, and are swift in spending, which must, as it were, bear the base in the consort; then a double number of roaring and loud-ringing mouths, which must bear the counter tenor; then some hollow, plain, sweet mouths, which must bear the mean or middle part; and so with these three parts of music you shall make your cry perfect . . . amongst these you may cast in a couple or two small single beagles, which as small trebles may warble amongst them; the cry will be a great deal the more sweet." He will not, however, have "cry" made the only object. "You shall observe that those hounds thus mixt, do run just and eaven together, and not hang off loose from one another, which is the vilest sight that may be."

If we realise that there was, as yet, no idea of "riding to hounds" as we understand it now, and put aside all thought of anything but the hound work and music, it is not difficult to imagine such a day as these old-time hunting men and women enjoyed. A few of the keenest might follow, perhaps on foot, when the huntsmen, one of whom carried a great curly kind of French horn, took the lym hounds in to find the fox, but the majority of the field would stay outside the cover until a note from one of those bloodhound-like lymers, and the winding of the huntsman's horn, announced that the fox was found. The "second whips" would then uncouple another hound or two to make sure, and then the whole pack would crash through the wood to the best music in the world, while the field would ride away, perhaps to a little knoll where they could watch the open space between two patches of woodland. They would be riding a very different kind of horse from the hunter of to-day: some would be on handy little nags, others stately on the cumbersome "great horses," with decorated and bejewelled reins and saddle cloth, who might be built for strength and power, but certainly had no idea of jumping or galloping under any circumstances: and none of the horses would be clipped. If it were not for dignity of position and greater ease and comfort in moving about, the riders might as well be on foot like the lesser folk. As the music—bass, counter-tenors, and warbling trebles—rang through the woods, now coming nearer, now fading for a time into the distance, then coming again, the "Master" might eagerly draw attention to Merri-

man's fine deep note, perhaps remembering how, for a long time, he had needed just that deep pitch to make the choir complete. Perhaps a neighbouring Master, who preferred a lighter chorus, would point out that, in his opinion, this pack was rather overloaded with bass, and say that, in big woodlands, a high-pitched note carried stronger and farther, and the usual good-humoured argument would take place, as it may to-day, about the respective merits of a large hound and a small one; the small, light-mouthed hound might be quicker, perhaps, to turn with the doubling fox. "Ah, but my big, deep-mouthed sort," might retort the owner of this pack, "is not so likely to overrun the scent like your shrill, beagle-like lot,"

Now the fox may break and cross the open space to the next wooded patch, and the field trot off to another point of vantage, their ears still keen for the magnificent music which makes the day for them. All at once there is a change in the note; the winding of the horn becomes a frantic fanfare; the fox has turned too short for once, and the music is as frenzied as the finale of a Beethoven quintet. A few of the less fastidious lumber down to see the kill, the ceremony of "casing" or skinning the fox is performed with due pomp, and the day is over. Every one goes home, unheated and unmuddled, after a pleasant hour or two, spectators rather than active participators, enjoying "the fragrancy and coolness of the Air" to the music of a well-balanced choir, knowing by the notes of the hounds exactly what the fox was doing out of sight in the big woodlands.

When, in this way, a squire or landowner kept a

pack of hounds rather for himself and his friends to watch and listen to than to ride with, the field must have spent very happy days, finding their fill of beauty for both ear and eye, though a less fashionable pack would be run on rougher and more energetic lines, and probably start a hare after having got their fox. They would still, however, be as musical as possible, though the "cry" would not be so carefully composed as in a high-class hunt. Shakespeare knew these musical packs, and in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* writes of hounds:

"... matched in mouth like bells,
Each under each. A cry more tuneable
Was never holla'd to, nor cheered with horn."

The horn, it may be noted, was used not only to "comfort" the hounds but also "that all travellers passing that way may know that it is a Foxe that is hunted"—a thoughtful idea for the pleasure of the pack riders, post boys, market people, and other chance travellers whose journey might be sweetened by the interest of knowing that it was no doubling hare or aristocratic stag that was afoot, but the fox of whom most would have had some farm-yard experience, and whose career they might follow with unusual interest.

As late as the eighteenth century hounds were still kept or drafted according to the requirements of the "cry," for, in the *Spectator*, we find that Sir Roger de Coverley "is so nice in this Particular that a Gentleman having made him a Present of a very fine Hound the other Day, the Knight returned it by the

Servant with a great many Expressions of Civility; but desired him to tell his Master, that the Dog he had sent was indeed a most excellent Base, but that at present he only wanted a Counter-Tenor."

"Lymers" and Coursers.

The method followed in this woodland hunting for centuries seems to have been to put in a couple or so of "lyam" hounds, chosen for their noses, and comparable to the tufters used in stag-hunting to-day. They were so called because they were taken in on a leash, or "lyam" and when they had spoken to a fox the rest would be laid on. In the more open countries, greyhounds were held on the down wind side of the cover when the fox was allowed to break, and coursed him from relay to relay. This probably led to a certain amount of riding, but strictly in order to see this greyhound work better than could foot-people, of whom there would probably be a little crowd of partisans round each waiting relay. Exactly the same methods were still practised in the hilly parts of Scotland in the last century, for, in *Guy Mannering*, Scott describes how Dandie Dinmont and his neighbours went into the hills for a day's hunting. They had two or three couple of foxhounds sent on ahead with a shepherd and the huntsman, "a sort of provincial officer of the district, who receives a certain supply of meal, and a reward for every fox he destroyed." These hounds and a miscellaneous collection of terriers and cur-dogs of all descriptions, including Dandie's own Peppers and Mustards, were put into the deep, rocky, wooded glen, while the farmers waited on the

outskirts, each with at least a couple of greyhounds, "of the race of those deer dogs which were formerly used in the country, but greatly lessened in size from being crossed with the common breed." These were held in leash, struggling and yelping and whining with eagerness as their excitement was roused by the noise of the hounds in cover and the hallooing of the men with them as they chased the fox from rock to rock and bush to bush down the glen, until at last he broke for the open. Then their owners slipped the greyhounds, which, "excelling the fox in swiftness, and equalling him in ferocity and spirit, soon brought the plunderer to his life's end."

By Elizabeth's time an idea was beginning to creep in that more might be made of the riding side of hunting, and the opinion was spreading that there was no great sport in hunting "within ground," a remark which seems to apply to the practice of digging, which was pretty general. All the earths would be stopped over-night, and if by chance a fox got to ground in a big head of earths, all the holes but one would be netted, and the wretched fox smoked out.

Digging.

Organised digging was a great pastime, much as badger digging is to-day, but it was a most carefully regulated proceeding. At least eleven different kinds of spades and pick-axes were required, besides a pail of water for the terriers, of which there would be half a dozen, all wearing collars "full of bells," which were calculated to "start" the fox sooner, and

also to act as some protection for the terriers themselves. If a lord or some gentlemen came, they must have half a dozen mats to lie on "as they hearken to the terriers." Some fops even brought a "wind bed" or air-cushion of leather, "but this were too great a curiositie." Everything was to be brought to the place in a "prettie little cart or wagon," and the cook or butler must "hang good store of bags and bottels . . . for it will be both comely and comfortable." They would, apparently, not have cared for the half-pasty or bread and cheese in the pocket that would do for to-day. Turberville, who gives all these directions, seems to have got a little pernickety during his Russian travels, for he says that "in hunting with hounds, although the pastime be great, yet many times the toyle and payne is also exceeding great," which is certainly true.

"Hunting to Ride."

Elizabeth, even in her old age, was a very keen sportswoman, and "every second day she is on horseback and continues the sport long"; and it may have been her keenness that gave an added impetus to the more active form of hunting. But that there was a certain amount of "hunting to ride" in the days of the earlier Tudors we find evidence in a rather unexpected quarter. In 1499 Erasmus came from Holland to Oxford, unable to afford a visit to Italy, and confessing that Oxford made a very good second to none, for Colet and others were there for him, and he had "given up his soul" to the acquisition of Greek. This man of vast learning and unquenchable enthusiasm for the classics was also a

hunting man, for it was known that he could "make a show in the hunting field. He is a fair horseman and understands how to make his way." Green, the historian, speaks of his "combination of vast learning with keen observation, of acuteness of remark with a lively fancy, of genial wit with a perfect good sense; his large love of secular culture and a genial freedom and play of mind"; and he might have gone a step further and added, what is probably true, that Erasmus acquired these silvery linings to his clouds of learning in the hunting field.

Real riding to hounds seems to have appeared first in the North of England. "Northern hounds," writes Gervase Markham, "running swiftly away with the chase, will draw your horse up to the extraordinary speed that he will forget all ease and loitering." This was probably due, in part, to the more open character of the country, necessarily calling for speedier hounds and horses. Whatever the reason, the north countrymen were "famous for the truth and swiftness of their horses, above all other countries in the kingdom." The hare was still, however, a formidable rival of the fox in the affections of hunting men, who considered that it provided better hound-work. "The chase (of the fox) is profitable and pleasant for the time," wrote Gervase Markham, "in as much as there are not so many defaults, but a continuing sport; yet not so much desired as the rest, because there is not so much art and cunning."

Proceedings seem for a long time to have been fairly haphazard. Hounds might kill a fox and finish up the day with a hare or a badger. In 1617 it

was thought no crime to have "hounded and killed a bitch fox" in June, but, from then onwards, hunting begins to take on a more modern aspect. There were recognised and remembered Masters of Foxhounds in different parts of the country. Bishop Juxon, whose appointment to the office of Lord High Treasurer had been such a triumph for the "High Church" party, who had had a hard fight to get churchmen admitted to civil offices since the Reformation, retired to Gloucestershire after the execution of Charles I in 1649, and there kept a good pack of hounds, but they probably did not stick to fox alone. In 1666 Viscount Lowther took his hounds down from Westmorland to hunt over what is now the Cottesmore country, and in Sussex the Old Charlton, or Goodwood, Hunt was definitely established under the ownership of the Duke of Monmouth before 1685, while a Mr. Thomas Boothby (1698-1753), the forerunner of Meynell, in Leicestershire, hunted what was, according to the inscription on his horn, "the first pack of foxhounds then in England."

An Early Pedigree.

Masters were exchanging hounds and breeding experimentally all over the country, as Mr. Scarth Dixon shows by tracing the pedigree of a hound of the Goodwood pack, which came from the Badsworth with a pedigree going back through Staffordshire, Sussex, and Nottinghamshire to about 1720, so that we may say that, by Queen Anne's reign, the dim ages are over, and here is the dawn of the century which saw fox-hunting established in its modern form.

In the more distant parts of the country the older, haphazard methods lingered for a long time. In Cornwall, forty years or so ago, was a trencher-fed pack in the village of Stratton, and it was no uncommon thing for anyone who felt like a hunt to go down to the Master and suggest having a day. Thereupon the old man would stand out in the street and blow on his horn till ten or a dozen couple of hounds turned up, and off they would go to find either a fox or a hare. A hare they were not, of course, allowed to eat, and a fox they would not, and it was a sight to see the old man riding home in the dusk, extolling his hounds to any handy listener, with the fox slung across the front of his saddle.

So, on the outskirts of reputable, recognised hunts, various little packs must always have been coming into existence and dying again, living relics of the old methods of fox-hunting, so that it is impossible to give a definite date and say: "Since this date hunting has generally been conducted in the fashion we now know." If the early eighteenth century is taken as a starting-point, it is due rather to the more settled conditions of life in general, which made it easier for some kind of method to be standardised, than to any precise cut-and-dried revolution. At any rate, "ancient days" were, generally speaking, over by the 1700's, and from then on, hunting history is starred with the names of great Masters, huntsmen, whips, and followers, as well as those of horses and hounds.

CHAPTER V

TRANSITION

THE eighteenth century was a remarkable one in many ways. Previously, no sooner had we emerged from one Civil War than we plunged into another. The '15 and the '45 did not seriously upset the country, and it may be said, roughly, that with the Georges, England entered on an era of relative domestic peace and prosperity which she had known in a slightly similar form under Elizabeth and James I, when a comparable freedom of spirits found expression in the most natural and spring-like literature the country has ever produced.

The Eighteenth Century.

The first violence of reaction against the narrowness of mind which marked the Commonwealth had spent itself in the licentiousness of the Restoration, to be sobered during the reign of William and Mary, and finally dulled and settled under Queen Anne. America had developed from a discovery to a colony, opening a new window for men's minds. Settlement followed discovery and conquest, trade followed settlement, and fortunes were made in East and West. A sense of responsibility towards the working classes was more individual than national. As soon as agricultural difficulties and poverty began to assume a serious aspect, the cotton

trade and the invention of appropriate machinery, with the consequent growth of factories, were ready to absorb the young, if not the old and conservative, malcontents; while men of thought had, at last, time once more to think as well as to feel. Pope, Dryden, Addison, Steele, fed their imaginations with observation, and coloured their observations with imagination. Theorising from sound premises to practical conclusions began to take the place of Utopian dreamings, while men who had no literary impulses, who were neither poets, novelists, essayists, economists, nor inventors, were free to translate into action the dreams of an unfettered sporting life which had hitherto suffered from the constant interruption of wars, religious or constitutional. They had time and opportunity to conduct their pastimes on a scale and in a manner unknown before or since.

It was as though they were drunk with the excitement of life, and a great number of them could afford the most exclusive drunkenness. John Mytton, when he came of age, inherited something like £10,000 a year, with £60,000 accumulated cash, and it is hardly surprising that he offered the opinion that he "wouldn't give a straw for life if it was to be passed on £6000 a year," and there were plenty of others like him. They scarcely seemed to know what to do with their money. Electioneering was a popular and easy way of getting rid of some of the surplus, helped, in some cases, by the expense of a pack of hounds, which others, doubtless, besides the Duke of Tergivasation, kept because they thought it brought in votes. "Another safety

valve," writes Surtees in *Plain or Ringlets*, "that the gentry of the old school had for emitting the steam of their wealth . . . was in huge house building," and the consequent burden of entertainment, one gentleman, "not an M.P. or a man of large fortune either," having a brewer's bill for £800 in one year.

Just as they did not know what to do with their wealth, so they were at a loss to find means of canalising the spirits which, liberated from the constant succession of wars, rose to the surface and burst in the most radiant bubbles of heady enjoyment. But, in the majority of cases, only on the surface. Underneath was a steady current of devotion to duty and the national interest. It is interesting to get a sidelight on the matters which occupied the minds of Masters of Hounds, outside the hunting field. More than one was also in and out of office with the quickly changing Governments, and the Lord Althorp who had the Pytchley early in the nineteenth century is an example of the best of these Parliamentary sportsmen. When in office he would start for Northamptonshire after a late night in the House, having relays of horses posted along the road for him, in order to be with his hounds in the morning. Done in the comfort of a car to-day, this keenness would call for comment. When it meant riding all those miles, in whatever weather might chance to offer, it is all the more noteworthy.

A different example is that of the "other" Tom Smith, who was born in 1790. It was he, as "Thormanby" tells us, who conceived the idea of a Thames Embankment, with "an open-air railway

along the causeway." He also invented a fore-runner of the armoured car or tank: "a locomotive iron-clad battery . . . a cupola-shaped affair armed with heavy guns and mounted on wheels . . . a sort of Martello tower."

Soldiering had become a purely professional affair, and a foreign war was conducted by the army and not by the nation as a whole, a large proportion of which made fortunes out of it—not through munitions, but owing to the high war-time prices of wheat and stock, which enriched the graziers as well as large, mixed landowners, many of whom put back into their own country-side what they had made out of it, spending without stint on their hunting establishments.

Country Life.

At a time when travel was beset with hideous difficulties and discomforts which tended to keep a man at home, and when there were no cinemas, gramophones, wireless, golf, or tennis to occupy his time when he was at home, the only outlet he had was in sport of one kind and another: hunting, riding for wagers, bear-baiting, cock-fighting. As Surtees says: "Country gentlemen were a land-locked, leg-tied tribe before the introduction of railways. Coaching was uncomfortable and posting expensive, besides which, a journey took such a time. . . . No wonder the gentry did not (make the journey to London) very often, and contented themselves with their country town." Though they were, perhaps of necessity, hospitable to a degree now undreamed of, boredom lurked in every crevice

of their conviviality. Local affairs, scandal, and gossip could not provide unlimited or exhaustive interest, and, though horses were always "news," caution and restraint in discussing them were very necessary when almost every one was trying to do, or hoping to do, almost every one else over a deal. The very jokes were "greeted as old friends, with a laugh." There was no *Punch*: national newspapers were few and far between, and scrappy when they did appear, while the local ones were soon exhausted. No wonder that the mania for making wagers about any and everything took such a hold. "Auctions" at dinner were common enough: half a crown dropped into a wineglass enabled the company to auction the horses of anyone present, the owner being allowed one protective bid. A more vicious example of this practice is pilloried in *Mr. Sponge*, when Soapey and Jack Spraggon unite to make young Pacey "challenge" Sponge's horse for his own watch and chain, "with appurts." The challenger and acceptor appointed an umpire, and the three pooled money for the benefit of this official, who was often enough in the know, and who then had to value the proposed challenges. "That being done," explains Spraggon to the apparently innocent Sponge, "the arbitrator says: 'Hands in pockets, gentlemen. If this be an award, Mr. Pacey's horse gives Mr. Sponge's horse so much—draw!' If each person's hand contains money, it is an award—it is a deal." It was a custom which made it easy enough for two confederates to rob some unsuspecting young fool who might imagine himself a great blood.

Surtees on Railways.

Not until the railways opened up the country was this isolation relieved, and with the coming of the railways, clubs were bound to follow. "Without clubs," says Surtees, "the railway system would have been incomplete. After such luxurious travelling a man requires something better than the old coaching houses," and, though the terminus hotels were fairly comfortable, they were out of the way, and "an hotel is still an hotel, and an Englishman cannot make himself believe that it is his home." The earliest London clubs did not provide bedrooms, but there were "bachelor bedroom houses" near by, and the standard of comfort in both was, for the times, very high.

With an easily accessible "home" in London, the old country isolation began to disappear, and with it many of the old habits and characteristics of the country squires. "It is the nature of luxury to breed luxury. . . . The old squires were rich . . . in the fewness of their wants, but the new squires have found wants that their forefathers were ignorant of. The old home manor won't do, they must have a moor; the row on the river won't do, they must have a yacht on the sea; the couple of hunters for Squire Jowleyman's hounds won't do, they must have six, and go upon grass; so that an increased expenditure has more than swallowed up other money-making and saving advantages. The consequence of this is, that the new squires have begun to turn their attention to what their forefathers had a great aversion to, namely, a little trade," and, it may

be added, much speculation, the year 1824-25 seeing the height of the speculation mania, causing nearly a thousand banks to fail in the following year. "Altogether," concludes Surtees, "the country gentlemen have become a very different race to what they were. They are more men of the world."

It was the natural result of easier travel and club life. Hitherto, each country district being to a great extent cut off from the next, the people hung together, the neighbouring squires' families intermarried, and the squire was, or might be, the father of his district, and his house the meeting place for every one round. The upshot of this comparative segregation was often enough a feeling of jealousy between the "cliques" which composed the rival hunts. The Hit-im-and-hold-im-shires had not a bad enough word to say for the Featherbedfordshire establishment, and where this jealousy existed, one hunt would not take advantage of any experiments, successful or otherwise, made by another. With easier conditions of travel and the making of acquaintances in the clubs, life in the country became less provincial. Masters would meet and compare notes, profiting by the experience of others whose hunts were too far away from their own to suffer from local prejudices. And, as travelling from London was as easy as travelling up, making all but the most distant countries "vaary contagious," strangers began to appear, with a consequent brushing up of the whole establishment. Hunts began to take on a more sophisticated character, extravagant oddities of dress and manner were

gradually ridiculed off the field, and after a burst of desperate riding, rivalry, and snobbery, hunting began to settle down to the more uniform standards that we know to-day.

Isolation had helped hunting to get firmly rooted in the country, and now fashion cast the net of attraction wide and drew in all classes, from the aspiring snob who hoped to meet "all the best people" there, to the grocer in whom sport must out, and on whom the stigma of trade lay less heavily than in his grandfather's time. Hunting was no longer considered "only fit for boobies and bumpkins," or the private amusement of the aristocrats, but became a kind of hall-mark of gentility. The dissipation of the Regency times which had led to a town-haunting, fashion-following "Corinthianism," when a gentleman might patronise cock-fights, dog-fights, and the lowest gambling dens, but would not think of getting dirty or dishevelled himself, died, and, according to Mr. Underhill, its death had been hastened by the return of Wellington and his officers from the Peninsula, infusing a freshness and vigour into society of which it was sorely in need.

Large Hounds and Dwarf Hounds.

A Master's preferences were respected, and no longer considered mere idiosyncrasies. If one fancied large hounds he bred them fantastically large, like John Warde, of Squerries, Kent, the "Father of Fox-hunting," whose great, bony, throaty hounds—"Warde's Jackasses"—were the laugh and the admiration, willing or unwilling, of

the hunting world. He defended his choice by affirming that heavy-headed hounds, once their noses were down, could not easily get them up again. If small hounds took the fancy, dwarf foxhounds, like the great Marchioness of Salisbury's Hatfield pack, appeared, or the nineteen-inch hounds of George Templer, of Stover, in the middle of last century. Live and let live replaced the old Cut-em-down-and-hang-em-up-to-dry feelings, and in this atmosphere of greater sense and tolerance, hunting thrived. Haphazard scratch packs gradually became amalgamated and firmly established as reputable hunts, no longer depending solely on the whims and tastes of the local landowner or other enthusiast. When Mr. Puffington took over the Mangeysterne hounds, they "were neither a scratch pack nor a regular pack, but something betwixt and between. They were hunted by a saddler who found his own horses, and sometimes he had a whip and sometimes he hadn't." The establishment died every season from lack of subscriptions, but, "somehow or another, they always managed to scramble into existence on the approach of another." Finally, the saddler went broke and Puffington appeared.

Growth of a Pack.

Such was probably approximately the history of a good many small packs all over the kingdom, while the best account of the general way in which a trencher-fed pack was set on a firm foundation is to be found, allowing for Surtees' satire, in the first chapter of *Handley Cross*. When hounds were owned and kept by various farmers, the titular Master was

often presented with a difficult problem, as he could not know whether he was to have six or a dozen couple out, and the hounds themselves could not develop anything of the "team spirit," which is no less essential in the hunting than on the football field. "Sometimes," in the old days of the Handley Cross Hunt, "Mountain's master couldn't come, consequently Mountain was not there; sometimes Tippler's master was absent, and the pack lost the services of Tippler's unerring nose. . . . The next step was getting a boy to collect the hounds before hunting," and Surtees notes that "it is only those who have witnessed it that can credit the sagacity evinced by trencher-fed hounds in knowing the hunting mornings, placing themselves ready for the summons, or rushing with joyous cry to meet the messenger. . . . Next, some of the farmers began to ride. At first they came out with young horses, just to let them see hounds. Then, as the horses got older, they thought they might as well work them until they sold them, and at last it ended in their riding as a matter of course." Then one farmer, perhaps better off or of better standing than the rest, one who, like Michael Hardy, the first Master of the Handley Cross, bred his hounds with a little more care, or showed a keener spirit when hunting, or had "always been more addicted to fox than to hare"—the original quarry of almost every hunt in the country—came to be looked upon as the manager, and then the Master, of the pack, fitted up some kind of a kennel at his farm, took subscriptions—"some gave Michael cash, some gave him corn, some hay, others straw, and all the old horses

in the country found their way to his farm"—and established a hunt proper.

"They were then," concludes Surtees triumphantly, "called foxhounds."

One of the most remarkable facts about fox-hunting is that, well understood though the etiquette and customs guiding it may be, it has never been the subject, since the very earliest days, of actual legislation, and its "laws" have been evolved and become established entirely by precedent and public opinion. There was a kind of committee at Boodle's Club, prior to the establishment of the M.F.H. Association, which was called upon to arbitrate in cases of difficulty and dispute, but no list of regulations has ever been drawn up. A "fence" month was very early established for the protection of foxes and other vermin, but nothing was said about 1st November as the date upon which a cub became a fox. Custom evolved that rule: custom and sufferance allow of hunting over and damaging another man's land: custom and the exercise of a common-sense compromise forbid the digging out of a fox run to ground in a neighbouring country, and there are some odd tales told relating to this most stringent of unwritten laws.

Bolting a Fox.

A fox has been bolted from a culvert by letting the sluice water into it from above: it is on record that one was blown from a drain by the application of a coach-horn to the other end; and one unfortunate Master who ran his fox to ground in a neighbour's

country, on the land of some ladies enthusiastic to see a kill, was forced to save him by jumping and stamping in apparent eagerness on the ground above, until the fox bolted and saved himself from the gardener's spade by leading hounds for a further good and successful run. On another occasion, so strictly did the Master observe this unwritten law that, having run his fox to ground in a drain in his neighbour's country, although the fox could be seen and almost touched, he would have nothing done because it would have been necessary to move one or two loose stones and so "break ground."

Some curious ideas about horses and hounds survived into the middle of last century. Colonel Cooke, who hunted Essex and Hampshire at various times between his birth in 1773 and his death in 1829, made a name for himself by abiding by three golden watch-words. "Blood" he would have. Bagged foxes he would not. Nor would he have his hounds lifted to make a sensational kill at the expense of ruining them for ever. But he deprecated the turning out of hunters to grass in the summer on the grounds that they were so likely to be stolen, and he hoped that, considering the prevalence of this habit, the police would take the matter up. He was very much against the curious habit of entering the young hounds to hare, or—as even Beckford allows—to cat, and both he and Beckford have a good deal to say against the unnecessary flogging of hounds. When a Master would have his hounds tied up and flogged in kennel, it would seem that the friendly spirit which is so marked to-day between a good Master and his pack had scarcely been born, though

John Musters (1777-1849) was a striking exception, and when his hounds winded him at a distance, nothing could prevent them from making for him, jumping up, even on to his horse, and greeting him with a most extraordinary exuberance of affection.

"W'at the little 'ounds did."

In the old trencher-fed times there was probably much more knowledge of hounds and interest in their work than there is nowadays, though there always have been, and probably always will be, riders who care nothing for hounds, intent only on hard riding. Colonel Cooke was profoundly shocked by hearing from a man who had ridden hard throughout a long and interesting day, that he had seen nothing whatever of the hound work, and probably cared less. A few years ago a hotel at Blandford was kept—and may be still—by a former huntsman to Lord Portman. After a long conversation about hunting, hound work, and the riding manners of a present-day field, this ex-huntsman concluded by deploring the way in which he said so many men would come out, have a short but desperate ride over a good bit of country, and hurry home to talk big about their own doings. Poking at the ribs of his audience with his stumpy little black pipe, the old sportsman ended up: "But w'at they always forgets to say about is, w'at the little 'ounds did for them!"

"W'at the little 'ounds did." The desire and the ability to see and observe this is what raises fox-hunting from the status of a mere riding competition to that of a sport. Lord Scamperdale was a curious

old fellow, but he loved his hounds, and it was the fear of what Mr. Sponge's hard-mouthed brutes might do to them that turned his comfortable after-dinner dreams into nightmares. To anyone interested in hound work, and knowing something of the hounds themselves, even the blankest day affords interest, while to be, even for a few minutes during a good run, in a position to see how favoured old hounds fight for the lead, or promising youngsters run well in the van of the pack, is to come within sighting distance of one of the greatest pleasures of mastership.

Changes in the Country-side.

Conditions in every phase of life are always changing, but probably there will never be such sudden and drastic changes again as occurred between the end of the eighteenth and the middle of the nineteenth centuries. As Justin Macarthy says in his History, life and methods were, except in small details, practically unchanged since Pepys's time, and the fifty years which saw the 1700's change into the 1800's made more difference in the general mode of life than centuries had made till then.

As deforestation increased, cultivation spread: the country was growing more and more open: drainage was much improved, and if, as some maintained, it weakened scent, it allowed for a higher turn of speed in horses, and, therefore, in hounds, at about the time when pace was taking first place in popular favour. Enclosures were spreading over the country, and in the grazing districts these were formed by the planting of hedges of young quick-

thorn, protected from the cattle by the post and rails on each side which, with the now full-grown hedge, offer such obstacles in the Shires. Canals and then railways cut through the country, and, at every stage of change, generation after generation declared that hunting was doomed and couldn't go on for another ten years. Bad harvests, the throwing of small farms into large ones, the growth of towns, the concentration of wealth into the pockets of the few instead of a distribution of easy conditions among the many—every change brought the same cry. Never have things looked blacker than they have at regular intervals for the last two hundred years. We hear the same to-day, with this difference, that prospects now are blacker than ever before. They always were. The intensity of the blackness of "things" in another fifty years' time will be a sight to marvel at. Perhaps, after all, to a snowball, everything less gleamingly white than itself is black, without intermediate shades of grey, and though "things" to-day could certainly not be any blacker, perhaps, two generations hence, they will seem only the attractive shade of grey which our forefathers' troubles seem to us.

CHAPTER VI

A SELECTION OF HUNTS

The Charlton.

THERE seems to be little doubt that the first hunt to be conducted on more or less modern lines was that called the Charlton, in Sussex, under the Mastership of the Duke of Monmouth, James II's son, and a Mr. Roper, who was manager for him and for Lord Grey, who kept an adjacent pack. At the time of Monmouth's Rebellion the Duke himself, of course, had other affairs to attend to, and Roper, as his friend, had also to give up the hounds and disappear for a time. When that little trouble was over, however, he returned and hunted them with Monmouth's son-in-law, the Duke of Bolton, as joint Master. Little is known in detail about this hunt, but Mr. Scarth Dixon quotes a very pleasant little letter written in 1727 by the Duke of Bolton to the Duke of Richmond, who later succeeded him. "As to our sport," runs the letter, "wee had very good last Friday, wee went out on Monday, but were driven home by the Rain, soe wee hunted yesterday and kill'd a Fox yt. gave us soe little Running, yt. wee intend to hunt to-day if the frost will lett us." When he resigned, the Duke of Richmond took them on, with Lord Tankerville for a time as joint Master, and in 1731 became sole

Master, changing the name to the "Goodwood." It was Lord Tankerville who drew up a useful list of "instructions" for the edification of his field, which included the axiom: "The gentlemen, for their own Sakes, will Observe that a Confabulation down the Wind often heads a Fox and indangers the whole Day's Sport"—a truism that might well be printed at the head of every fixture list to-day. The pack was given up in 1813.

Sinnington.

Pretty well contemporary with the Charlton Hunt in the south was the Sinnington in Yorkshire, under the disreputable second Duke of Buckingham, who, however, had the saving grace of believing, as every good Master believes, that he had "the best pack of hounds that ever ran upon English ground." This was at Cliveden, in 1674, but he had estates in Yorkshire, and it was there that he did most of his hunting, until, in 1687, he caught a chill when digging a fox, and died. Whether the Duke was followed by a succession of joint Masters or not is, as Mr. Scarth Dixon says, a matter of conjecture, but, in 1714, a John Such, whose drinking-horn still survives, appears to have hunted the country, and later on hounds seem to have existed as a trencher-fed pack with a huntsman who got a wage of £9, 15s. 9d. and found his own horse. They were again taken into kennels in 1891. About 1796 the subscription was raised to 18s., and three years later to a guinea, and by 1810 the sport, or perhaps the number of hounds, had so increased that the huntsman required the assistance of "two at least of

those who know hunting," who were to "go out with them to teach them their discipline and to act as whippers-in."

Yorkshire Hunts.

Yorkshire, in the eighteenth century, seems to have supported a good number of miscellaneous and short-lived packs. By 1726 Squire Draper was hunting Holderness on an income of £700 a year, and supporting a family of fourteen children—one of the daughters whipping-in to him—and a bevy of neighbours, on home-killed beef and home-brewed beer; there was a Roxby foot-pack which afterwards became the Cleveland; a pack hunting the Bramham Moor country; the Badsworth, under a Mr. Bright, who sent the hound Luther to the Charlton, and later under Tom Hodges, who drafted his hounds on hunting days in accordance with the previous night's dreams. Early in the nineteenth century, the Earl of Darlington, whose method, when a fox was found, was to get four couple of hounds with him and go on, used to hunt the country for six weeks in spring and autumn. In fact, any number of packs roamed that county, and somewhere about the end of the eighteenth century they united to form the Yorkshire Union Hunt Club, one of the most exclusive clubs in the country. The Middleton seem to have begun about 1762, under a various succession of Masters, until in 1804 Sir Mark Sykes took them on, and, in 1811, Sir Tatton Sykes, who included the Holderness country. It was Sir Tatton who used to walk eight miles before breakfast to see his hounds fed, and even in

his old age would walk beside his horse most of the way to a meet. He favoured small horses, and at any more than about 15.3, would shake his head, and murmur, "O'er big, sir; o'er big!" He was noted for his mild but efficient tongue. Some wild young rider who had a fancy for playing the huntsman was halloaing to hounds one day, and damning them for not attending to him. Sir Tatton, overhearing him, remarked mildly: "My hounds never attend to what silly people say."

The York and Ainsty for a long time hunted a country loaned by other hunts. The Ainsty side was hunted by permission of the Lane-Fox family, the north was lent by Sir Mark Sykes, and the south-west by the Slingsbys. The Druid (1822-1870) gives a picture of the Yorkshire Wolds in those days. "Ash, 'the weed of the Wolds,' had not begun to flourish. . . . Beyond a few solitary elms and beeches, and an occasional belt of firs, there was hardly a tree to be seen on this vast hunting ground of hill, valley, and morass. Except round the village garths, there was not a gate between Market Weighton and Beverley. The Wolds were covered with ling . . . but there was not cover enough for ten miles round Sledmere to hide a goose, much less a travelling fox. The land was worth 2s. 6d. an acre, and had hard work to pay that."

Civic Ceremonies.

At some time or other during the eighteenth century there was a Northumberland pack, whose chief claim to remembrance is the fact that, when it

met at Newcastle, the Mayor and all his councillors turned out in their robes of office. In the Tetcott country at the present day, the market-town of Holsworthy accords a civic welcome to hounds on Boxing-Day, when the town is beflagged, and, in lieu of a Mayor, the brass band turns out and plays the hounds into the Square.

Beaufort.

The Beaufort has an early history. There is a tradition that the first Marquis of Worcester was hunting fox, and the first Duke, who never acknowledged William III as rightful King, lived in retirement at Badminton, hunting hare and stag. The third Duke was keeping a kennel book for his thirty couple of harriers and six couple of deerhounds from 1728, and gradually increased the latter until they equalled the harrier kennel. It was the fifth Duke who was first converted to fox when, after a day with stag, he found a fox and enjoyed such a run from Silk Wood that he resolved to hunt fox regularly. Finding that his country did not hold enough foxes, he took over the Heythrop, and used to move his whole establishment from one country to the other, putting every available servant, from cook to boot-boy, on a horse. In 1803 his successor gave up the Heythrop side, but still suffered from lack of foxes, and it was not until the century was half over that the country could stand six days a week under the eighth Duke. It was he who, as "Thormanby" records, sent hounds to distant meets in a van drawn by four mules, the huntsman driving with his Master in a drag.

Quorn.

The Quorn has been supposed by some to have been the first proper pack, because a Mr. Thomas Boothby (1677-1752) had a horn on which was engraved the boast that "with this horn he hunted the first pack of foxhounds then in England, 55 years," but, in the light of other researches, this is now held to refer to quality rather than to antiquity. The Quorn has had some famous Masters, including Meynell, Assheton Smith, and Squire Osbaldeston, but few of them stayed very long. Nimrod observes that a great change came over this country after Meynell's day, early in the eighteenth century, when he says it was very open until the habit developed of planting gorse covers, which had the effect of shortening the runs, and "one fox," he says, "found in 1792, may have been worth a brace found in 1842." The crowds, even in his day, were very large, and the graziers, who farmed most of the land, had not yet fallen on bad days, so that practically every yard of the country was under grass. No wonder that the fashionable world flocked into Leicestershire so that, to escape from the hard-riding crowds, hounds had to be bred faster and still faster, and that more than one Master had to beg the thrusters to be careful not to ride over certain favourite hounds—it was apparently hopeless to expect the whole pack to be avoided.

Brocklesby.

Perhaps the earliest hunt that stated in writing that it preferred fox to hare was the Brocklesby,

which, in 1713, was hunted by Sir John Tyrwhitt, Robert Vyner, and Charles Pelham of the later Yarborough family. They were to have shares in a pack of hounds for five years, and definitely to hunt fox with sixteen couple of hounds, a huntsman, a boy, and three horses. A manuscript list of hounds dates from 1746. This pack formed "one of the foundation stones of modern fox-hunting," and at the end of the century the first Lord Yarborough and his huntsman, the first Tom Smith, inaugurated a standard of not more than twenty-three inches for their hounds. This Tom Smith was the first of a line of family huntsmen. His son Will took his place in 1816, to be followed by a grandson and then a great-grandson of Tom's, each called Will—perhaps a family record.

Hampshire Hunts.

Hampshire seems to have been even more overrun with packs of hounds than Yorkshire, so that "a man might not know which pack to hunt with" when he started out of a morning, but was "pretty sure to find one or another out." The Vine first left hare for fox about 1791, under a Mr. Chute, who stuck to the old fashion of wearing a pigtail. Forty years earlier there had been formed a club which undertook to meet at Winchester, Arlesford, and Popham Lane, and the huntsman and first whip, Sharp and Harrison, had a most successful arrangement by which, if one could not get to hounds by reason of the lie of the country, the other took his place. This has been proved to be an excellent practice in a difficult country. By a similar arrange-

ment, a present-day Master and his first whip have accounted for a remarkable number of foxes which would otherwise have escaped, for hounds find one or the other of them ready to help at need, whichever side of a difficult and intricate coombe or boggy bottom they may chance to run.

So crowded was the New Forest at one time that an arrangement was come to by which not more than two packs should be out at a time, and the H.H. is said to have had a curious origin. John Villebois kept a pack of harriers, and one day ran a fox and killed him in a part of the country then hunted by a man called Russell, who preferred fox to hare. Russell was so angry that he told Villebois that "you'd better hunt the country yourself." Villebois took him at his word, and the H.H. was established. This was about 1803. The Hambledon Hunt Club, formed about 1799, gives a sturdy character to those old Hampshire men. One of their rules was to meet at nine in the morning, and stop for no weather, unless there should be a foot of snow at the kennel door. They were patriotic, too, and no French wines could be called for at their dinners, under a penalty of five guineas.

The Old Surrey.

Jorrocks's country, the Old Surrey, seems to have had a various collection of scratch and private packs, chiefly harriers, until, about 1750, a Mr. Gobshall collected a kennel at Bermondsey. Business men were beginning to hunt, and Peckham was a favourite fixture, being within easy reach of the business headquarters at Cheapside. Many of these

business men kept their hunters at Croydon, which was a centre of great gaiety, of which Surtees, in *Jaunts and Jollities*, gives a good picture. "The town of Croydon," he writes, "is the general rendezvous of the gallant sportsmen. The town furnishes an interesting scene on a hunting morning, particularly on a Saturday. At an early hour, groups of grinning cits may be seen pouring in from the London side, some on the top of Cloud's coaches, some in taxed carts, but the greater number mounted on good, serviceable-looking nags. . . . Some few there are, who . . . having tacked a buggy to their hunter, and given a seat to a friend, who, leaning over the back of the gig . . . leads his horse behind"—and runs Surtees fairly out of his grammar. Arrived at the Greyhound Inn, the collar marks on the horses were "carefully effaced by the shrewd application of a due quantity of grease and lamp-black," while their owners went in to breakfast. Cautious men of business seem to have carried their business methods into the hunting field, for "each man cranes and rides, and rides and cranes, in a style that would gladden the eyes of a director of an insurance office." When it was all over, however, and the sportsmen on the way home, carousing was the order of the day, and there is a story of a man who, riding home with some friends in the dark, fell off, and, his horse trotting unconcernedly on, his friends never noticed that his rider was missing till they got home.

Braes of Derwent.

The history of the Braes of Derwent is an interesting one, if only because of its connection

with Surtees. Ralph Lambton, who, judging by Surtees' account of him, was a model for all time of what a man and a Master should be, had hunted part of Durham for years, but when he met with an accident which finally paralysed him, the hounds were sold into Leicestershire—unseen, for £3000, a record price for those days—where the racing methods did not suit them at all. Surtees, thereupon, in his own laconic phrase, "got hounds," and hunted the country for two seasons, when he had to get rid of the pack, as they turned sheep-worriers. He passed his rights and privileges on to the neighbouring Slaley Hunt, but, in 1841, an unemployed ex-huntsman canvassed the country for subscriptions, and a pack called the Prudhoe and Derwent were got together, to hunt a country almost entirely by trespass. As the members of the committee, without exception, had the right "to give directions to the huntsman, whips, and earth-stoppers . . . and to have sole and entire control" over them, the horses, and hounds, it was rather a case of too many cooks. In the end, the general cold-shouldering that the interloping hunt received caused its demise, and when the Slaley Hunt came to an end in 1854, the Braes of Derwent took over the whole country.

Tetcott.

At the other end of England, on the borders of Devon and Cornwall, is another hunt with a long, if chequered, history. In the early 1720's, John Arscott, of Tetcott, hero of the well-known song, kept hounds on his own estate, and, in 1828, Parson

Jack Russell and his friend, Harris of Hayne, amalgamated, and for a couple of years hunted the country as far west as Bodmin, with three or four different kennels scattered over the district. In spite of Russell's untiring efforts to persuade the country people that a fox could show good sport, they continued to murder them on sight. It was a habit then to ring the church bell when a fox was found, to gather a party for his destruction. Owing to their persistence, a great part of the country had to be abandoned. Later on, about 1850, a North Devon pack was formed, most of which was taken over by the Hon. Mark Rolle in 1859, and eventually became the Stevenstone, while at Stratton was a trencher-fed pack where hounds seem to have been kept for a time in a rough barn, or linhay, where a hare was in the habit of coming to amuse them at night, and the villagers would hear their music ringing over the fields until the hare had had enough, when she would lead them back to the "kennel" again. This nocturnal music was not altogether popular, and an irate doctor, having missed his sleep on their account for a week, rose up one moonlight night and took his gun to the bottom of the garden. Twice the hounds pushed their hare up and down the moon-flooded cornfield opposite, and the third time the pack was short of a couple, which history cheerfully affirms were not very good ones. Eventually the Tetcott country was divided into two: the South Tetcott, with kennels in the original village, and the Tetcott, hunting partly in Devon and partly in Cornwall. Nimrod says of Devon that it was "certainly the worst

hunting country I ever was in," but, as there were then seventy-two packs, and half the gentry and most of the yeomanry kept "a cry of dogs," it scarcely had a chance, especially with the murderous propensities of the few who did not keep hounds.

Hunt Clubs.

Most of the better known hunts had, at one time or another, a Hunt Club. It was a convivial age, and though there were still some people who kept a kind of open house club, such as Surtees pilloried in Sir Harry Scattercash's establishment, or the expectation of six or eight extra to dine on a hunting night, as at Jovey Jessop's, a regular club was found to be a more satisfactory affair.

One of the earliest of these was down in Sussex, where the Duke of Richmond established an extremely fashionable club, of which all the rank and fashion seem to have been members. The Duke of Somerset, who, owing to some private or political difference, did not patronise the Charlton Hunt, tried in vain to establish a rival club on his Petworth estates, but, in spite of a marvellous cook and other luxuries which he hoped would catch the taste of the elect, he had no success, and gave it up. Like most of these early clubs, the Duke of Richmond's was very hospitable, for inns were uncomfortable, often expensive, and a day was not well rounded off unless it could be run all over again at the dinner-table. So the Charlton Club had a rule that "If any stranger is seen in the Field a-hunting, he may be invited that day by any of the Company, and his reckoning to be paid by the Persons then present."

Up in Yorkshire the Sinnington Club went a step further, and imposed a fine on anyone who was in at the death and did not dine with the company afterwards. By 1772 there was another Yorkshire club, the Cleveland Friendly Society, whose habits, at least as related to hunting, were as blameless as their title. Membership was sealed by a vow, taken with "the right hand upon a Hunting Horn," to be "no enemy to Cocking, Smocking, Fox-hunting, or Harriers, and to endeavour to discover all Poachers." This club would have "no box or dice," and though cards might be played, a limit of £5 was set to losses, while all wagers had to be censored by a majority of members then present. The H.H. Club, which took on a second lease of life in 1795, also protected its members from the results of their own folly, by making it possible for them to buy themselves out of any overnight debt by paying a forfeit of £2, the money going towards a cup for the Hunt races. One club, at Chumleigh, near Exeter, under George Templer of Stover, celebrated its meetings by eating plum pudding and tongue together, which was apparently a local custom, and by Nimrod's day, Shropshire ran to two clubs, which held a Hunt Week at Shrewsbury in November and January, with a dinner and a dance.

The Sedgefield Club, in Durham, had a good lease of life under Ralph Lambton early last century. For some weeks before and after Christmas, Lambton and his hounds took up their quarters in that little town, which was described by a contemporary enthusiast as "one of the few places in the world worth living in." The Club, under the reign

of the Master, dined together every day, and "though large parties sat down almost daily, composed of men of all ranks and ages, there was never anything like riot, while gaming was wholly unknown." "Mr. Ralph," says Surtees, "came there to hunt, and took care that other people did the same." A man who had come there to hunt on one occasion, but was unexpectedly short of a horse for the next day, put his membership to good use. Towards the end of the evening, when the milk of human kindness, which is sometimes disguised as port, was at the height of its flow, he "pulled a smart snaffle bridle out of his pocket . . . and asked if anyone would like to put a horse's head into it for him the next day. Mr. Ralph," adds Surtees, "was so tickled with the idea that he sent to his stable and ordered one."

All over the country there were then big men, well enough off to make life pleasant for themselves and their friends, and to be able to foster an almost family feeling among their tenants. It is true that, by Surtees' day, the land was not in such a prosperous state as it had been—he was a farmer, and knew what was happening in the north, at any rate. But it took a very long time for the old, almost feudal relations between master and men to wear off, and perhaps there was something of the old feeling of dependence on a great man left over from long-ago troubled days, when a man's tenants and followers were practically his own army and bodyguard, and, with a little stretch of the imagination, it may be thought that the hunt uniform and hunt button

were but a new form of the old family badges and livery which united the members of various parties from the time of the Wars of the Roses. Like everything else now, however, hunts are set on more of a business foundation, though they are not necessarily the worse for that, and the old spirit that built them up is still alive.

Foreign and Empire Hunts.

The hunts mentioned in this chapter have been chosen, not because of their fame or popularity, but because, in their origins, there has seemed to be something of character or oddity which reflects, to a certain degree, the spirit of the country, of which they form a not inconsiderable part. And it is not only in England that Englishmen have hunted. Where they can ride a horse across country, there they will hunt—fox, if they can: if not, then jackal, hare, pig, or, perhaps, even that “cat in a kitchen” to which Beckford contemptuously condemned a weedy hound. In America there are nearly fourscore recognised packs of foxhounds. In India, Canada, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, there are many flourishing hunts, and in Gibraltar the Calpé Hunt was established one hundred and twenty years ago, becoming the Royal Calpé in 1906 under the patronage of King Edward and King Alfonso, while the Roman foxhounds were founded by Lord Chesterfield in 1843. If we are to believe Mr. Kipling, there was once even a pack of hounds in Ethiopia, where the “Little Foxes” were hunted by eight couple of draft-hounds from England, led by the matchless Ray-al

and the blue-mottled rogue, Bigglebai. The governor was *ex officio* Master, and the administration of punishment to the owner of a neglected earth was held better title to ownership than any Government recognition. Perhaps no gift of hounds has ever been so cheerfully made as that made to the Inspector on leave by four Masters of Hounds, who listened to the preposterous account of the ill-treatment accorded to the natives of the Gihon Hunt—eagerly swallowed, and later, to his own discomfort, acted upon by the nasty, blue-jowled reforming zealot who invited discomfiture by so closely resembling the graceless Beagle-boy.

So from Ethiopia to Rome, and from Tasmania to California, Englishmen have carried the horn with them. The foundation and constantly replenishing source of nearly all these hunts has been English blood, and as hounds in hot countries have been found to develop a tendency to muteness, the connection has never been allowed to drop. A difficulty in getting a fresh draft out from England once drove a Master in India to try the effect of an Airedale cross with, apparently, the best of results, though it could hardly be taken as a precedent.

The Boulogne Hounds.

Perhaps the most amusing time, however, that an Englishman has ever had with hounds abroad was when Surtees took on a pack of harriers near Boulogne, whose Master, on the very morning of an advertised meet, was haled off to prison for debt. As the only hunt servant promptly vanished, Surtees and his joint Master, Colonel Charitté, had

no means of knowing the names of the hounds, so solemnly conducted them, five couple at a time, to their late master's cell for identification. When they tried to hunt fox, they found the native breed so fat and lazy that they despaired of ever getting a good run, until Templer of Stover came to the rescue, and suggested that they should try his method of getting well-conditioned foxes by keeping some on long chains in a yard. The first of these intensively trained foxes was shaken out of a bag at a spot up to which a drag had been laid so that, although run in two parts, the field might be bamboozled into thinking that they had had at least one first-class run. The stamina of the hounds was not equal to the pace at which they started off after the aniseed, but Templer had foreseen this possibility, and the drag had been craftily lifted, in order to allow the straggling pack to get together again. At this carefully staged "check," says Surtees, "Hounds, being carefully cast the wrong way, heads and tails were presently reunited, and a scientific cast made."

There was later, however, an unfortunate incident, when a fox went to ground under the counterpane on the bed of an irate French peasant, and the countryside procured the services of the mounted *gendarmerie* to prevent the Englishmen from "enlarging their reynards" in future. Then began a game of dodge and a laying of false trails to hoodwink the gendarmes into thinking that the hunt was going out on another day, or in a different direction. But the *gardes champêtres*, or ordinary dismounted police, were the hardest to throw off. "These came upon

the parties unawares, popping out from behind stone walls or any sort of ambushade that would cover them, and cutting the horseman's bridle reins before he was aware of their presence. Hence it became necessary to ride with the main body of the cavalry." The mounted gendarmes added a considerable amount of spice to the sport, and, as Surtees says, "Those who think fox-hunting not sufficiently exciting might here have supplied the deficiency—a flying fox in front and a sharp sworded soldier to urge them on behind."

The estimation in which foxes were held in that part of the country is shown by Surtees' description of the little town of Samer, or Sammy, as it was inevitably called, "remarkable for nothing . . . save the manufacture of fox-skin gloves," which were much worn by the French postilions, while the brushes were used to decorate the heads of the horses of the Paris fish-carts. Surtees arranged a joint day with a local pack here, and "the French marched off to the chase in military array, armed with guns and carbines, playing on numerous twisted horns." The English, thinking this was merely a preliminary parade, started late, but soon "tracked the great splay-footed" hounds, among whom were two, Warrior and Wonderful, "both as full of faults as ever they could hold," which had been generously and pompously presented to the French by Surtees and his friends. "One was an incorrigible babbler and skirter; the other would do only what he liked, which was generally nothing." Nevertheless, on this occasion, they led the pack, such as it was. The hounds were not intended to do

more than rouse the foxes, "which the scattered sportsmen intercepted and knocked over as best they could." (*Robert Smith Surtees*, by Himself and E. D. Cuming.)

At the end of this day, Surtees and his confederates found so much litigation ripening against their hunting activities, that "all those," as he delicately puts it, "who would not, by doing so, jump out of the frying-pan into the fire, made off to England," and with this excursion into foreign parts, we may leave this chapter to come to an end.

CHAPTER VII

GOOD COMPANY

Mastership.

WRITING of T. A. Smith, Master of the Quorn, Nimrod, who calls him the "first fox-hunter and sportsman of the age in which he lives" (1776-1858), says that "in no other pursuit would pre-eminence have been so attractive," and fox-hunting is such a many-sided business that this is probably very true. A Master comes into contact with every class and phase of the life in his country, and is, perhaps, the most public character in the district. If not actually Lord of the Manor, he is, practically, as a farmer recently said of his own Master, Lord of the Country, and any arrogance in the pre-eminence which is his by virtue of his office reacts perhaps more quickly in his disfavour than under almost any other circumstances. A Master, naturally, has more scope than his field for the exercise of his personality: it is he who creates the pack, shows the sport, binds the whole country together into a brotherhood, and contends with more difficulties than perhaps any other man in the realm of sport. To restrain his field from over-riding hounds; to keep the balance nicely among his following of all shades of temper, inclination, and social standing; to be on good terms with even those

farmers who are inimical to hunting, so that there is no personal feeling to prevent their possible leanings towards conversion; to know everything that goes on in the country-side, and to keep that knowledge under his hat—if a few seasons as M.F.H. were a necessary preliminary to entering the diplomatic service, no doubt there would be more wisdom displayed in high circles. As in most cases, there is an occasional exception that proves the rule, but it does not usually have a long reign. There have been Masters in the past who have tried their followers too high by being consistently late at meets, waiting on the whims of a succession of dubious-moraled ladies; others who have been in such a hurry that, like Lord Suffield, they always had hounds cast forward, and always at a canter, and showed, in consequence, such poor sport that the country soon tired of them. There was at least one who was so misguided as to endeavour to force a regular subscription from the farmers, forgetting that they more than pay their way by allowing the hunt to ride over their land. But such cases of mistaken vocation are rare, and, as a rule, it is safe to say that, should the country ever find itself in need of a dictator who shall combine a Machiavellian shrewdness with the general wisdom of a Solomon, the patience of a Job, the tongue—on occasion—of one of the more subtly flagellatory minor prophets, the suavity of a Chesterfield, and the resolution of Jack the Giant-killer, it might do worse than select some one of the many M.F.H.'s who blend all these characteristics with a fine, fastidious palate. For their difficulties are enormous, and their patience often highly tried.

Not long ago, a Master had run his fox into the neighbouring country, and come to a check near a wayside cottage. "Have you seen my fox?" he asked of an old man at the door. "Ees," was the reply. "I see'd 'n." "Which way did he go, then?" "I see'd 'n. I see'd 'n," reiterated the old man. "Down that way he went," and he pointed in the direction from which hounds had brought the line to that spot. The Master was puzzled. "Can't be," he said at last; "can't be." "But 'tis so, I tell 'ee," insisted the other. "I see'd 'n. Great big old dog fox." "Can't be," repeated the Master, and then: "How long ago was it you saw him?" "Yesterday in the morning," was the unexpected reply. The old man is still living, more, perhaps, owing to the long tradition of endurance under exasperation built up, slowly and painfully, by generations of Masters, than to any natural bias towards saintliness on the part of the Master in question. The use of strong language is a privilege generally accorded to Masters, but some know that it is not always the heaviest shot that reaches farthest. An impetuous subscriber once viewed a brace of foxes out of cover and, without waiting for hounds, galloped in pursuit. When the Master at length got within speaking distance of him, and every one else's ears were pleasurably itching, all he said was: "I say, So-and-so, when you've caught one of those foxes, would you mind letting my poor b—y hounds just have a look at him?"

Before society, and with it the hunting field, attained its present rather stereotyped form, there seems to have been wider scope for the display of

eccentricities of character than there is now, or it may be that, when organised hunting was a new delight, more notice was taken of actions and oddities which to-day pass almost unnoticed. Certainly, a cursory glance through the portraits that hang in the gallery of hunting memory provides us with a very good company of characters, and by picking out a few here and there, as chance directs, a sample may be gathered which will give us some idea of the whole.

T. A. Smith.

Among Masters, Assheton Smith himself was one who left his mark as a "most desperate horseman," though strictly in the way of business. As Master of the Quorn, and the first amateur huntsman in Leicestershire, he was known as the man who would stop for nothing, and his saying that "there is no fence you can't get over with a fall" became a by-word. Nimrod says that "he undoubtedly proved himself the best and hardest rider England ever saw," but he was no crazy, harum-scarum flash rider. "No man," continues Nimrod, "ever saw Tom Smith ride fast at his fences, at least at large ones (brooks excepted), let the pace be what it may," and though his nerve was phenomenal and he was never away from his hounds, his clear, laconic judgment never left him, and it was probably due largely to his example that the cult of wild riding came to be tempered with common sense. His unrivalled gift of "hands" was proved over and over again, and he certainly seems to have had some queer horses to deal with. One, which came over

from Ireland, known as the "Devil," and "as unmanageable a savage as ever wore a bridle," even he had to send home half a dozen times from hunting, though, in the end, he got on the best of terms with him. There was another horse of his, named the "Clipper," who pulled so badly that a bit of extreme severity had been invented and named after him, but Tom Smith put the curb chain in his pocket on the first occasion on which he rode him, and apparently had no further trouble.

He was very particular about his hounds, but for his horses was said never to give more than £50 when in Leicestershire. He got good value for his money. Coming one day to a canal over which were two parallel bridges a few feet apart, he chose the wrong one, and found a locked gate at the far end. Seeing that the other bridge was open, he jumped across the intervening space of water, and went unconcernedly on his way. He acknowledged himself that he was "not the best tempered man in the world," and was apt to say what he thought in moments of stress. His preliminary "Hi! Hi!" to anyone who rode over his hounds, says Nimrod, "will never be forgotten in Leicestershire."

John Warde.

An earlier Master, John Warde, of Squerries, near Westerham, Kent (1752-1838), "Glorious John," or the "Father of Fox-hunting," as he was called, seems to have been a man of very strong prejudices, and to have cared very little what others might think of him, so long as he gained his point. He once opened a butcher's shop in order to bring local prices down

to a reasonable level, which seems a bold thing to have done in his own country, but it successfully achieved his purpose. It was he who would never cross his hounds with the Quorn blood, and is said so to have disliked the strain that he got a couple of very bad draft-hounds of theirs, called them Queer'em and Quornite, and exhibited them as specimens of the Quorn breeding. His fancy ran to large hounds, and he bred to such a size that his pack was known as "Warde's Jackasses," but, as Assheton Smith himself said that they were the "best pack of hounds he ever rode to," he seems to have been justified in his choice. That he knew his business is attested by Nimrod, who says that his "name is every day quoted as an authority for some rule in the kennel, or as the author of some witty saying or pleasant joke." His witty sayings were worth listening to. "Never buy a horse," was one of them, "from a rich man who hunts," and another: "Never believe a word any man says about a horse he wishes to sell—not even a Bishop." He seems to have been extraordinarily popular with all classes of society, and Vyner says that he was "as much at home and refined in the more elegant society of the drawing-room, as he was when entertaining with his inexhaustible fund of wit a circle of sporting farmers at the cover side," though it is to be hoped that the last two words are a slip of the pen, and that the trappers' or farmers' dinner was the occasion of his jokes.

He never hunted hounds himself, but was Master of the Pytchley from 1797-1808, the New Forest till 1814, and the Craven, a bad scenting country in

which he averaged forty brace of foxes a season, until 1825, when he gave up hunting. He seems, from all accounts, to have been one of the best type of "fine old English squires" who did so much for the country in general during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and his is the honour of having originated hound-shows.

Meynell.

Earlier still came Hugo Meynell, the first Master of the Quorn (1735-1808), the man who really established hunting on more or less modern lines, setting an example, among other things, for all time, by his friendly relations with his farmers. A great point is made by the older writers of his custom on a market day of waiting at the meet for any farmer or grazier whom he had reason to think would be coming as soon as business was over. This, then unusual, "general urbanity and condescension," had its reward, for Nimrod says that "in his time, a man's life was not more secure from violence and murder than was that of a fox."

He was one of the finest houndsmen known, and considered his horses merely as a means of being with them, though he would have the best means he could get. His eye and ear for a hound were marvellous. He was said to have been able to remember and name a strange pack after once having seen them drawn for feeding. There is a good incident told of him that, when Lord Sefton, who followed him in the Quorn country, was drawing a small cover a little way off, one hound spoke, and Lord Sefton later asked Meynell if he knew which

it was. Meynell said that it was Concord, but Lord Sefton was sure that Concord had been at his heels all the time. "If not Concord, it was Caroline," answered Meynell, but when the huntsman came up, he said that he had seen the hound, and that it had been Concord.

"System of Meynell."

Almost every other pack in the kingdom drew something from the blood of Meynell. "The first qualities he considered were fine noses and stout runners," but he still followed the old custom, and "broke in his hounds at hare, to find out their propensities . . . and he drafted them according to their defects." When he had made his drafts, he divided the pack into two lots, the Old and the Young, leavening the Young one with a couple or so of steady old hounds, and hunting them in the woodlands, keeping the Old pack for the best country. For results, he preferred a small hound as being generally "the stoutest, soundest, and, in every respect, the most executive," which perhaps accounts for Warde's dislike of the strain. His great idea was to let hounds work for themselves. "He seldom or never attempted to lift his hounds through sheep, and from that habit, and the great flocks the hounds were accustomed to, they carried the scent on . . . much sooner than any lifting could have accomplished." This, as Vyner points out, was the basis of the "Science of Meynell," which did so much to educate future huntsmen. He had another characteristic. "When a fox dwells in cover, and will not go away," he decided that "the best plan is

to leave him and not kill him—another day he will, perhaps, afford good sport,” and he was “more indifferent about blood than most owners of hounds.” Before hunting, it was his habit to break-fast off a pound of veal, condensed to the amount that could be contained in a small teacup, and he took in his flask—tincture of rhubarb.

The Hurworth and Matty Wilkinson.

A very different kind of Master was Matty Wilkinson of the Hurworth. He and his two brothers, Tommy and Lozzy, were well-to-do farmers who had hunted for many years and then entered into a kind of joint Mastership. Matty seems to have been in command, Lozzy had a subscribing interest, and Tommy was feeder and whipper-in, sleeping with a trap-door at his head, through which he could speak to the hounds in kennel. Nimrod, who once hunted with them, was full of admiration of their rough-and-ready sportsmanship. He says that the bitches in whelp were fed on the Sunday joint, and that the puppies were given all the top of the milk, the family having only the skim. Matty also kept a tame fox running about the place, so that the puppies could have a little wholesome fun.

There was no nonsense about these three brothers. Matty, replying to a question about a forthcoming meet, answered: “Tommy is very ill, and if Tommy dees, we can’t hunt till Monday; but if Tommy doesn’t dee, we shall hunt on Friday.” Matty himself rode about seventeen stone when Nimrod was out with him in 1826, and as a consequence his horse developed a technique of “creeping” through

his fences which was the envy of Nimrod during a good run when they had over a hundred jumps. "When I saw him creeping over his fences," he writes, "which appeared nothing to him, while my horse was flying over them, afraid to touch a thorn, I almost envied him his great weight." Matty, at all those hundred fences, only spoke to his horse once, and that at a very awkward place, where he told him to "Tak' time, lad," with the best results. Full of admiration as he was, however, for the old man, Nimrod gives him a great wiggling for having dug out and killed a fox on one of his neighbours' earths, close to the kennel door. As it was not our earth, we may be almost glad to find that he was so human. Owing to his great weight, he was continually riding after hounds rather than with them, and perhaps on this occasion he had made a series of lucky nicks and been overcome by his excitement. With his rhinoceros breeches (whatever these were), an oilskin hat, and one spur, he must have been a quaint enough figure, though the garb in which Jorrocks appeared at Covent Garden preparatory to a day with "The Yorkshireman" in Surrey, was so extraordinary "that it would have been spurned by the late worthy master of the Hurworth." Such men as this, and old Squire Draper of Yorkshire did much to provide a good backbone for hunting for ever.

John Musters.

At the opposite end of the society scale from Matty and his brothers was John Musters (1777-1849), who went through Eton, Oxford, and the Militia before he took hounds. He seems to have

been a great boxer and a great athlete, and succeeded, perhaps by virtue of these attributes, in cutting out Byron in the affections of his neighbour, Mary Chaworth, whom he married—not very successfully. After learning the business in South Nottinghamshire, he took the Pytchley, and then, as “Thormanby” says, “commenced a roving career, hunting in Lincolnshire and half a dozen other shires but never staying long enough in any country to make his mark.” He certainly took liberties with his fields, and once tricked them all by ostentatiously leading them over a swollen river by the bridge and then slipping back, through the flooded fields, to recross by a half-submerged footbridge, which no one else knew of, to enjoy an excellent hunt by himself. This is reminiscent of another Master, of whom it has been recorded that his field would never give him a chance of getting to his hounds, and were also most annoyingly inclined to tack themselves on to his tail when they got away on a good thing. So he pounded them all one day by leading them into a large field, which everyone knew to be thoroughly well wired all round. Supposing, however, that he knew of some new gap at the far side, they followed him trustingly until they came to the fence, where the wire was new and shining. Here he calmly dismounted, climbed over the hedge, and got on to his second horse, which was waiting there for him by arrangement. The story goes on to say that he never even stopped to throw a glance at his discomfited field.

On another occasion Musters showed up a suspected enemy. He had chopped his fox in the

morning, and later sent his second whip, with the mask tied to the end of his thong, on a five-mile gallop to a big head of earths, with orders to bury the trophy when he got there. At the end of a fine hunt the field were satisfied to leave the fox which had so successfully got to ground. The local game-keeper, whom Musters distrusted, came up soon after and, being told that a fox had gone to ground, solemnly promised that he should on no account be disturbed. An hour or so later, Musters came unexpectedly back, to find the keeper and his friends hard at it, encouraged by a nice little tuft of red hairs at the end of a bramble they had thrust down beyond their digging. Musters showed them what they were digging after, and doubtless told them what he thought of them.

Corbet.

Then there was Corbet of Warwickshire, "Father of the Trojans" as he was called, from his famous hound, Trojan, from whom he bred pretty well the major portion of his pack. He succeeded John Warde in 1791. On 9th February 1811 he advertised his hounds for sale, and such was the keenness of those days, they were paid for—1200 guineas being the price—and hunted by their new Master, Lord Middleton, two days later.

"The Other Tom Smith."

There was "the other Tom Smith," who pulled the Pytchley together after its questionable history under Lord Chesterfield, and in 1838 published his *Extracts from the Diary of a Huntsman*, with its diagram of the famous "All round my hat" cast:

Bellingham Graham.

Sir Bellingham Graham, who declared that a £700 subscription would not keep him in spur straps and blacking, and who, with the exception of Osbaldeston, was the only man to have both the Quorn and the Pytchley;

Lord Sefton and his Horn.

Lord Sefton, who followed Meynell in the Quorn country, and was known for his rare use of the horn. He is said not to have touched it for six consecutive days, and on the seventh to have used it only because there was a fog. He was very heavy, and used to have three horses out, though he was not, as is usually supposed, the first to introduce the system of second horses, a distinction that belongs to Henry VIII.

Osbaldeston.

Finally, there was Squire Osbaldeston, who could make quite a good living by backing himself to perform astonishing feats of endurance; who hunted the Quorn and, in 1827, took the Pytchley. He used to put down foxes freely, only stipulating that they must be "old English foxes, no damned French dunghills," and getting about three brace a month.

Three Hunt Servants.

But there were others besides Masters who left a name to be remembered. There was Jim Morgan, huntsman to the Essex and later to the Tickham,

who put his arm out of joint so often that he got into the habit of riding over gates, as he could not open them; the North Warwickshire Jim Maiden, who fell into the boiler in 1820, lost his leg, and, after a great deal of agony and perseverance, got fitted with a wooden one, which enabled him to ride; Tom Hills, huntsman to the Old Surrey, who carried an old-fashioned bugle for his horn, saying: "I can't make the new things speak at all as I want to, so what's the use of blowing up the wrong spout?" It was he who, having bought a fox at Leadenhall, was held up by a highwayman on Streatham Common, and invited him to feel for himself in his pockets. The highwayman, having first chanced on the pocket which held the fox, showed no further interest. Hills ended up by keeping a public-house at Bletchingly, but always vowed that drawing beer was not nearly such a good game as drawing a cover.

Tom Moody.

Perhaps the greatest of all hunt servants was Tom Moody, who died in 1790, and who had been first whip and crony to George Forester of Wiley Park, Shropshire. He was a drunken old rip, but a great character, and a good hunt servant, and when he died, he was carried to the grave, at his own request, by six earth-stoppers, followed by a couple of favourite hounds and the horse he used to call his "Old Soul," with the last brush they had won together tucked into his brow-band. When the service was over, three view-halloos were given, for he had said: "If I don't lift my head then, you may

fairly conclude that Tom Moody is dead." He was, and a song about him was sung at Drury Lane, with a crowd of Shropshire squires in the stalls to hear it. Thinking it a pity that a London audience should go away with the impression that the singer's "View-halloo!" and "Tally-ho!" were the real thing, these hunting men invaded the stage and showed how it should be done.

The Squire of Wiley Park, Moody's Master, was a queer customer. He never married, but patronised a varied collection of ladies of one kind and another, whom he "chose for their horsemanship as much as for their beauty," and he treated his miscellaneous families of children very well. One of the ladies, Phoebe Higgs, is said to have been taken as a model for the great Lucy Glitters, and this is probably fact.

"The Running Tailor."

In the early part of last century there was a famous tradesman called Hastings, known as the "running Tailor of Cheltenham." He would go out five or six days a week with the Duke of Beaufort's or his home pack, always on foot, having often to cover a great many miles to get to the meet, and he was never far off at the end of the longest run, having a perfect knowledge of the country and of the line a fox was likely to take. So great was his passion for following hounds that he is said to have refused a very good job as earth-stopper, on the grounds that he "couldn't stop earths o' nights and hunt o' days, too." Alken did a picture of him running beside Lord Seagrave's horse in 1834, and his long, wiry frame looks as though it could never tire.

"The Flying Childe."

One of the wildest horsemen was that "Flying Childe" of Kinlet Hall, Shropshire (born 1750), who was supposed to have been the "first to introduce the present spirited method of riding to hounds." He didn't seem to care what he did on a horse. He once rode the 170 miles from London to his home—for a bet, of course—in twelve hours, sucking a cherry-stone to keep his mouth moist. Towards the end of this ride, he found a wide gap broken in the bridge over the flooded Severn, and jumped it. He usually knew what he was doing, however, and when he amazed the local people by galloping down a very steep, boulder-strewn part of the Clee Hills, known as the Titterstones, he assured them that, as long as a horse was allowed his head, so that he could see the ground, it was all right.

"The Mad Doctor of Melton."

There was an old dandy in Nimrod's time, hunting in Staffordshire, and wearing ear-rings—a fine old sportsman, "particularly so if you believed all he told you"; and Colonel Thornton, in the Bramham Moor country, with his racing hounds, Merkin and Lounger, and his love of notoriety and readiness to back his own opinion on any point; and the "Mad Doctor," of Melton, who was a great hunting and racing man. Called in once to a patient who was suffering, among other things, from an excess of hunting, the doctor, knowing that his advice to rest would be disregarded, administered a blister to his patient's "saddle-mark," so that riding

was rendered an impossibility. It may be noted, in passing, that a doctor may make a very good Master of Hounds, if for no other reason than that some, at least, of the older countrymen whom he attends will be afraid to injure his foxes in any illegitimate way, "for there 'ld be no knowing he mightn't do something back to me when I was took bad," as one old farmer expressed it.

Parsons.

Prominent among the ranks of keen hunting men have been the parsons, ever since, in the time of Edward I, the parson of Aysgarth was granted a licence to hunt fox, and though, unfortunately, very few of them hunt nowadays, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries there were plenty of them up and down the country, getting health, serenity, and a closer acquaintance with their parishioners in the hunting-field. One sportsman, Parson Bower, of Yorkshire, once chased a poacher till his own horse got cast in a ditch, and he had to leave it. Turning to some ploughmen near-by, he asked: "Can any of your horses get over a fence?" and taking a raw four-year old, "bare-backed, with chains and collar, just as it was," laid the poacher's dog, which had been left tied to a gate, on to the scent, and fairly hunted his quarry down after a short but good cross-country hunt.

In Warwickshire, early in last century, was a parson Master of Harriers, who occasionally hunted fox. This man, the Rev. Charles Curtis, towards the end of a long run, got to the bottom of his horse, and urging on his huntsman, promised that, if he

killed the fox, he would have him for dinner that night. He was as good as his word, and at a large dinner-party the chief item on the menu was roast fox, some, at any rate, of which was eaten.

The Hon. and Rev. William Capell, of Watford, was another hunting parson, and he was in the habit of catching the coach after Sunday service, in order to be at Monday's meet. One unfortunate Sunday, he found himself so much delayed by some special service that he was in danger of missing the coach, so sent an S O S to a neighbouring clergyman for help. This sportsman, whose name has, unfortunately, not been preserved, sent back to say that he couldn't possibly come, as he was busy clipping his own horse for Monday.

There was a Parson Harvey, of Gloucestershire, who used to send his horse on, with an old cloth for a sheet, and drive to the meet with his saddle in an old farm-cart, which he left, tilted in a field, in the care of his groom, till he cast up at the end of the day; and Griff Lloyd, with his fondness for getting a nick in a run, and a habit, when riding along a narrow lane in a queue, of calling out to the man before him, "in the blindest spirit of inquiry": "Where did you get that horse of yours, sir?" and slipping past him as he turned to answer.

Jack Russell (1795-1883), the West Country parson, is well enough known to have a book all to himself, and there are still people who remember hunting with him. He is the most famous of all hunting parsons, hunting an enormous area in Devon and Cornwall, part of which is now the Tetcott country, and he was, perhaps, the last of that

fine old school, who managed to hunt, even though they could not well afford it, and yet did by no means neglect their parishes. But, if there are few of his cloth who follow in his footsteps now, and few other hunting men whose doings are recorded by a Nimrod in what Surtees called, with a spice of truth, his "buttering matches," there are giants in these days as well as in the past.

Contemporary "Giants."

Not long ago, the Lamerton was hunted by two brothers, one of whom would carry the horn in the morning, the other in the afternoon. Just before the War, the neighbouring country was hunted by a young Master who could not, or did not care, to use his horn, but would send a piercing trill rolling off his tongue, a sound which the hounds understood perfectly, and which carried to an almost incredible distance. Zach Goddard, whip and huntsman to various Masters early in the nineteenth century, had the same habit. He couldn't blow a horn, and the "Druid" says that "his scream was almost unearthly in its shrillness, and he trusted to the natural organ under all circumstances."

There is still living, though, unfortunately, not hunting, a former Master of a West Country pack, in whose country is a large and most unpopular woodland, from which it is almost impossible to tell in which direction hounds are getting away. The Master always seemed to know, and time after time the discomfited field would find, too late, that hounds were gone, having, of course, the run of the season, and no one with them but the Master. He

had discovered that on a hillock at the top of the wood was a tall holly tree, standing well out above the wind-shorn top of the rest of the wood, and as soon as hounds started to draw, he would slip away, climb the tree, and thus have a perfect view in whichever direction the fox broke.

Another Master, still, happily, on the active list, was not long ago alone with hounds running hard over some very trappy country. A farmer who had followed far in his wake, pulling down some places, leading over others, afterwards said to him: "Those were some queer places you got over the other day," to which the only answer he got was: "I suppose they must have been. I didn't stop to look." Anyone who knows the extreme difficulty of riding anywhere near hounds in that particular bit of country will know that it takes something more than merely sitting in the saddle and not looking, in order to be on any kind of terms with hounds. The "queer places" on that occasion included rotten banks with very varied top-growth, bog up to the hocks on the take-off side, and anything from a bicycle to another bog on the other, besides a river, a canal, and an assortment of rotten-lipped ditches. It was the same man who, riding his own horse in a Point-to-Point, came to a bank about three-quarters of the way round, neck and neck with his only serious rival. This bank was succeeded by a stretch of heavy ground, a type of going which suited his horse very well. Turning to his companion, who had won the race the previous year with the same horse, he said: "Well, I'll say good-bye now, So-and-So. I'm going home," and he was lighting his pipe in

the paddock before the other passed the winning-post.

It is this audaciousness, tempered with a devotion to the sport as a whole, that makes and keeps fox-hunting in a class by itself, and so long as this spirit lives, the country must be the better of it.

As a last example of the lengths to which devotion will go, we may take the story of the man who overheard an irate farmer, whose corn had been rather damaged in a good hunt, swearing that he would never allow another hound on his property. "That corn won't suffer," said this enthusiast. "And, if it doesn't, will you change your mind?" The farmer, feeling dismally certain of disaster, scoffed, but agreed. Thereafter, night by night, the other man tilled fresh seed over the damaged patch, and manured it well, with the result that the best corn reaped in that field was found on that spot, and the farmer became one of the staunchest supporters of the hunt ever after.

Queer Quarry.

Queer as some of the old-time characters may have been, they also, at times, ran some queer quarry. Mr. Vyner records that Lord Middleton's hounds in Warwickshire, after a long spell of frost, once changed from their fox to the line of a dark, red-coloured cur-dog, ran into him, and broke him up. Another dog also led hounds once in the same county, but, luckily for himself, he kept to a long line of stiles, a thing no fox would do, and the huntsman, Will Barrow, realised this fact in time, and just managed to save him. Squire Osbaldeston

once took his mixed pack to hunt a wolf which had escaped from a circus caravan, but they did not find him. Two donkeys, however, have been chased, also a pony, for Vyner once knew a lot of hounds in a paddock which, just for fun, started baying at a pony which was grazing in the same field, and ended by running him for five miles, luckily without a kill. The first donkey, he tells us, was started by the Croome hounds in 1887, when hounds were out at exercise, and suddenly broke away after the donkey, excited by the shouts of a boy who was trying to catch him. He was "brought to bay" in the river, and safely taken home.

The other donkey is a more recent affair. A certain pack had run a tired fox into the next country. As they crossed a field near a farm, some colts and a donkey broke out, and went clattering along the lane. Hounds reached the lane, and turned up towards the farm, in the opposite direction to that taken by the colts. A sudden misgiving struck the Master. "I do believe they're running that donkey," he said to his whipper-in, who indignantly repudiated the suggestion. Two minutes afterwards, however, they reached the farm buildings, to find the whole pack baying at the heels of the donkey, which was standing wrong way in between the shafts of a cart, while a raging old man was banging away at them with a great cudgel, and his women-folk screaming, scarcely knowing what it was they were screaming at, but sure that it must be something very dreadful. A claim was afterwards said to have been made for compensation for the donkey's tail, though if the claim was genuine a new tail had

grown with astonishing swiftness. It was also reserved for this pack to hunt a fox after they had killed him. They had found very early, and killed him on a canal bank. Then, one of the field having reported that, on the way to the meet, he had seen a fox crossing a field, the Master decided to try for him, and hounds soon had the line. Scent was not too good, but hounds hunted him nicely over a fairly wide stretch of country, and finally, after an hour's run, marked to ground on the exact spot where they had found and killed him earlier in the day. This incident is probably without parallel in the whole history of hunting.

So it goes on, and has gone on, generation after generation, with Masters, servants, and followers of distinction, oddity, and character, building up and maintaining a great tradition. It is impossible to refer to more than a small minority by name, and the few here remembered have been picked out more or less at random. The greater and more famous are safe in the hands of their biographers. It is the average that makes the fairest sample, and the fineness of the average in the history of the hunting field is a thing to make the heart glad.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HUNTING YEAR

MOST hunting people know that the Hunting Year begins, oddly enough, on May 1st, though many who are not interested probably imagine that it begins and ends with the hunting season. Two other approximate dates are also generally familiar: the beginning of November, when hunting starts, after a preliminary month or so of a mysterious thing called "cubbing," which may, to the really ignorant, even refer to the young entry; and some indefinite time in the spring, when lambs are plentiful, and the spring corn is tilled. If they ever give a thought to the time between the last and the first of those dates, they are probably content to think that the Hunt staff, like themselves, enjoy a good and idle summer. The horses are out at grass, there is no hunting, and except perhaps for feeding the hounds, what have they to do? If the heart sinks a little when the last day of the season comes, it is only natural. But it will not sink quite so far if the owner of it understands, and perhaps takes some part, however small, in the long summer programme.

The absorbing business of deciding the ancestry of what will eventually be the young entry of the season after next has been disposed of, and some of the bitches already have a litter of those ridiculous little squeaking whelps of which they are so proud.

Others are roaming about in expectation of theirs, and when you visit the Kennels will come sidling and preening up to you, proud of their liberty, asking for a friendly word, their sterns working like the pendulum of a wag-by-the-wa' clock. The early ones are in their own private ward, and when you go in, will disengage themselves gently from their busy little family to welcome you at the door, and then, softly nosing their little whelps, invite your word of admiration and sympathy. These bitches are very gentle now to those whom they know, although occasionally one whose subconscious mind goes back to the dim, wild beginnings of all animal nature will forget the friendliness with which hundreds of years of intimacy have covered the original mistrust of human kind, and refuse to allow even the kennel-man more than the minimum privilege of approach. Before long, these mothers will go back to the kennel, and the puppies, having learned to lap and eat for themselves, will be scattered about the paddock, each family in a wired-off run of its own, till the day comes when they are old enough to go "out" and must receive their names.

Naming Hounds.

The methods of naming vary slightly in different kennels. Some are content with any reasonable name that begins with the necessary letter, and will run a careless eye down the columns of the dictionary, picking out the first word that is at all suitable. But it is much more interesting to find names that will include at least one or two of the letters from

both sides of the family, and it is often a very difficult task. To have to find four or five names reasonably compounded from, say, Privilege and Hotspur, or Rhapsody and Vampire, puts the difficulties propounded by Torquemada in the shade. A compromise will probably have to be arrived at by which the first litter shall begin with Pr . . . and the other with Va . . . , to distinguish them from a third, which must be named from Vera, and Valiant, Valuable, Varmint, Vanquish, Prosperous (not such a bad one), Primrose, Prebendary (a very poor effort), and President will go wriggling and crying and eventually falling fast asleep, two or three at a time, into a box, and set out with you for their new homes. Now you see the distant corners of the country from a different angle: the lanes are deep and thick with honeysuckle, grasses, campion, and all the lovely hedgerow growths of early summer, and looking very different from the winter picture which dwells in your mind so pleasantly. You make a note as you pass of one or two alterations which it may be useful to remember later on—a large field which has changed hands and is now divided by a wire fence, with a gate at the far end; a stout-looking rail, apparently a permanent fixture, where there used to be half an old bedstead, and a tangle of cord. For, though you may make an expedition on some long midsummer evening to try to find a better place across some bad bottom, it is only the real fixtures that will present at all the same appearance in two or three months' time.

You deliver first one and then another of your charges at the farms where they are expected. Some-

times, perhaps, "Maister" has not told "Missus" that he has asked for another this year, and you hear a doleful tale of the mischief last year's lodger wrought: how he got into the dairy, ate a pound of butter, and then made off with a loaf of bread; how he ran off with the end of the table-cloth before the dinner things were cleared away. But you smile ingratiatingly, remind her what a fine one that puppy has grown into, and then turn out your candidates to let her pick her choice. At the sight of the sprawling, questing, lumbering, helpless little things, her face softens, and she has one in her arms, saying: "Oh, well, 'tes interesting to see them," and you know that, accidents apart, one of the best of well-grown puppies will return to the Kennels about Christmas-time.

The next visitor may find a welcome warm and ready for him, as the children come out to pet and stroke him. "The little de-ur," they murmur, and their mother assures you that she is glad to have one of Rhapsody's puppies. The family was very fond of Rhapsody, and determined to send back her son in even better condition, if that were possible. Last year's puppy, they remind you, after a day or so with them, decided to return to infancy, and finding a sow with a litter of little pigs, shouldered them aside and settled down as her adopted and favourite child.

This business of taking out the puppies will last, with intervals, till July. Meanwhile, there are other expeditions to make. A litter of cubs has been reported from a doubtful quarter, and you set out to try and verify it. The wide moor is drenched with

the evening sun. Cotton grass flaunts its white banners and the greenish spikes of the twayblade are sweet as honey as you saunter over the spongy, half-boggy marshes, examining miniature tussocks for a sign that a fox has paused there, or stooping, find his footprint in a muddy patch. You work your way up to the gorse cover in the far corner, and catch a glimpse of an old fox slipping away, but find no sign of cubs, though some small, fairly fresh droppings show that they have been about. Then you plough your way across to a big bank, where there was a litter two years ago, and find the rushes beyond all beaten down and flattened over a wide circle, where the cubs have obviously been playing not long ago. You examine the holes in the bank, and decide that, though not now tenanted, they have been occupied fairly recently, and the cubs cannot be very far away. Presently you cross a rising field, and come to the lip of an old quarry. Creeping stealthily up to the edge, you crane your head cautiously over, taking advantage of a stumpy little overhanging bush, and then you see five young cubs playing a game of catch-as-catch-can on the grass-grown floor below. You do not move: you scarcely breathe. They have not seen you, and the breeze cannot have wafted your scent to them. But one suddenly senses something not quite right in the atmosphere, and in a flash they have vanished. As you trudge happily back over your tracks, a hen-harrier, quartering the ground like a spaniel, works his way up the wide moor ahead of you; a corncrake from a distant hay-field creaks companionably, and as you reach the road, perhaps an owl brushes soft

wings over the tops of the hedgerow. As you reach the car, you stop suddenly, hearing something that sounds like a sheep in distress. It comes again, and then you remember having been caught guessing by the drumming of a snipe before. Looking up at a lucky moment, you see him shooting down through the air, at a steep angle, wings stiff, tail feathers aslant to tune the bleat of his descending flight.

There are idle days, too : days when you may lie on the grass and watch a cricket-match in which some of your hunting acquaintances or their friends are playing. It is not high-class cricket, but the kind in which the out-going batsman gives up his bat to the next man, who is also waiting for his second pad. It is exciting work, where the out-field has a tricky job to gather the ball as it bumps off the rough grass ; where the bowler spits on his hand, and alternately flattens his fore-lock and gives an extra twist of devilment to the ball ; where one batsman resolutely holds up his hand and cries : " Stay ! Stay ! " to his too eager companion who, like himself, remembers that this is the last ball of the over, and wants to have a smack at the new bowler. And, in between, you may hear more stories of cubs, or of an old fox who has been doing more than his fair amount of damage, or, perhaps, a quiet and friendly hint as to the weight due to some other farmer's poultry claim. Such an hour is never wasted, and it will be remembered some day in the winter when you have inadvertently given the *coup de grâce* to one of your cricketing friends' shaky gates, or when he, also riding, beckons you to slip with him across some short cut he does not wish the field to use, but is

glad to take someone who remembers the thirty not out that his son made one hot afternoon between hay and corn harvest.

The men are all this time busy enough at the Kennels. Puppies at walk get sick, and have to be visited. Crusty farmers must be unofficially seen and reasoned with on the friendly, comfortable terms of disguised intimacy that both understand so well. At various small village gymkhanas, the first whip is in great request as a judge, and there are, occasionally, early in the summer, litters of cubs to be found and moved to some place where they will be more welcome. There are usually some repairs and odd jobs to be done about the Kennels which, in a small hunt at any rate, can be done by the men. One such kennel has a couple of new brick walls laid by the men: the benches need repairing, and the wire round the paddock where, in fine, dry weather hounds can play during an afternoon, needs periodic attention. The horses must be looked at and the blacksmith fetched to see to their feet.

But these are all odd jobs, all in the day's work. Puppy-judging is the earliest and the chief of the summer's functions. It is the walkers' Garden Party. In their serge suits and hard hats, their wives and daughters in summer finery, it is very pleasant to see the keen anxiety with which they watch their particular puppy as it comes up for judgment. There is some cause for pride, too, when they see some great Master from far away come specially to judge the puppy they have brought up with such care for more than half a year. And those who do not get prizes are content, for in the matter of hounds every one

may have his own opinion, and if your puppy is somewhat on the small side, why, it is well known that that particular judge is "such a one for size." Besides, hasn't your own Master said that your puppy is one of the best, and does you credit? And, as you haven't heard him say that to anyone else, it must be true. Moreover, during the approaching season, it may very well happen that those puppies who do not catch the judge's eye may turn out to be better workers than the prize-winners. In one hunt, the Master was presented, on his wedding, with a portrait of his best hounds, not one of which had been a winner at the puppy-judging, and the triumph of a man whose late lodger proves his excellence at a crucial moment in the field is far greater than the triumph of a show winner—at least in his own eyes.

The Master's little speech touches any sore spots there may have been during the past year, and heals them. His wife says her friendly word as she gives you, or your neighbour, the prize: you have, maybe, done a little business, given—and received—some friendly chaff, and then there is tea, where every one mixes together, and the Squire himself, or his Lordship, or one of the gentlemen who always turn out so smart in red coat and top hat that the very crops are the better of it, sits beside you and chats away as though he were your own wife's cousin. . . . Oh, well, perhaps if the foxes hadn't got that dozen of prize fowls, they might have been run over in the road, and you couldn't make a claim for that, could you?—not unless the car stopped, which it wouldn't, unless it happened to be some of the gentry of the Hunt.

Later on in the summer comes the gymkhana, where every one is out for a bit of fun, which, with horses newly up from grass, they will certainly get. No one, except, perhaps, the promoters, takes the gymkhana very seriously. The scurry round the big field, with half a dozen small jumps taken at racing speed in a fine, careless rapture of irresponsibility, is the catch of the afternoon. It is called an Express Letter Race, or a Life Saving Race, or carries the good news from Aix to Ghent in a manner which neither "I" nor "Dirk" ever imagined. It is largely a children's day, and children on all kinds of mounts, many begged from the farmers, twist in and out at the polo-bending with a holiday ecstasy. There are side-shows, too, which draw a lot of money, especially Bowling for a Pig, and the final "bowl off" is an affair of enormous solemnity. One year there may be a pony to be won by a stroke of luck; and perhaps the hounds are brought down, and every one joins in a most glorious hunt, helter-skelter and no checks, after a drag—a highly improper proceeding, but a very great "draw."

And then comes August, and the horses are brought in, fat as butter, with pounds of flesh to be worked off and transformed into muscle before they are fit for even the most leisurely of cub-hunting days. If you are lucky, you will ride out with hounds in the very early morning, before the heat of the day has awoken. All through the summer, of course, hounds have been exercised, at first with the men walking, later, perhaps, on bicycles. But at first it is largely a matter of educating the young hounds—those who appeared at the puppy-judging—to a

sober behaviour on the roads. Each puppy is coupled to an old hound, and for the first few weeks they do their best to strangle their unfortunate tutors. Tugging and wriggling, ecstatic at the mere suggestion of an interesting scent at the roadside, they pull and struggle, stop, and bounce on again, colliding with others so that they get inextricably mixed up, and perhaps one puppy slips out and is away, until, suddenly struck with fear at his unaccustomed isolation from the pack, confronted, unaided, by the entire world, he comes galloping back again in a panic.

But by the time the horses are in they have sobered down, and that part of their education is complete. Now they have to learn, and the old ones need reminding, that sheep are not to be so much as observed, that a note on the horn means instant recall from the most interesting of investigations, that a warning cry of "'Ware horse!" means what it says, and that it is as well to obey.

One of the pleasantest parts of the whole hunting year is the early morning ride out to hound exercise. You can get to know more about each individual hound and his little idiosyncrasies than in any other way. There is the freshness and the beauty of the very earliest of the morning, and the happy feel of a horse between your knees again. The steady jog-trot of hound pace is by far the best to ride at for a long time: the horses get fitter every day, and the hounds' feet harder, their muscles swell, and you yourself feel fit to fight an ogre. There are other pleasures, too. The cup of tea and bread and butter at a farm-house; the rowan berries beginning to take

on their brilliant autumn scarlet in the hedges; the indefinable tang in the air from backward flowing sap and golden bracken; the consciousness of the yearly marvel working in yourself, which takes away all undue regret for the passing of summer, and makes you a sharer, in however small a degree, in the seasonal rhythm that swings the lovely world on from year to year, every change a glory.

Then, at last, comes the first day of cub-hunting, and, because it is surely the happiest meet of the whole year in any country, I propose to describe what happens every year about the beginning of September in the little village of Foxworthy—a village which well deserves its name.

Practically every inhabitant keeps poultry, but they all accept the depredations of the foxes round about stoically, and pride themselves on the handsome coats which distinguish their foxes: as every one knows, good coats own to good feeding. Poultry claims are rare, and the smallest in the hunt.

The harvest on this side of the country is the first to be cut, and the first cub-hunting meet is a fixture for the village, when the entire population turns out, lines the hedges, lumbers across the fields, and aids the huntsman by every means in its power. The hounds, consequently, have not a chance of keeping their heads down. Every fox—and, in the early season, cubs are plentiful—is holloaed on sight, and almost every one is hunted, not always by the hounds. The Master, who also carries the horn, is helpless, incapacitated alike by laughter and the multitude of amateur huntsmen on foot.

A cub is viewed in a little marsh, and pande-

monium ensues. The hounds, blown off their noses by half a hundred pairs of excellent lungs, are shooed and hustled on to the line by the spectators, who treat them like a flock of recalcitrant sheep stampeded in a gateway, and, as though voices were not enough, arms and bodies are brought into play with the action of a four-handed fireman stoking a furnace. The bewildered cubs scatter like dust on a wind. "He's under our wood-stack!" comes a cry, and obediently the Master trots his hounds across to the wood-stack where, as not a hound owns the scent, he leaves the terrier, more to humour and occupy the crowd while he slips off to draw the lower cover, than in any faith that his cub is there. He has scarcely got across the next field, however, when a roar of voices follows him, and a messenger gallops after him. "Terrier's speaking, zur! Farmer see'd fox go out through the orchard!"

Back comes the Master, for he understands that he is, to-day, the servant of Rumour. But eyes that wish for a fox are apt to be flattering to a rat, and his return is vain. Realising that a cub must, at almost any cost, be killed—he knows well enough the patience of the husbands of the poultry wives—he now makes a serious cast of his own, for he has kept his head through all the pandemonium, and when he means to kill a fox, can usually do so. Evading the heart of the crowd, he picks up the line of his original cub, and after a hearty ten minutes of the best, presents the brush to the largest poultry loser, the mask to the owner of the land, and gets home as quickly as he can.

It is a game, this first day, but the season is begun,

and it will not be long before real business starts. The "idle" summer is over: there will be dances and whist drives and concerts to keep the hunt alive, in more ways than one, as the year rolls its way on to Christmas and thoughts of the coming Point-to-Point season, with the grinding days of road work that will get horses fit in wind and muscle for their ten minutes of concentrated endeavour. From May Day to May Day again the round goes on, and those who have amused themselves with hunt interests through the summer will get a finer flavour out of their hunting through the winter.

CHAPTER IX

THE PERFECT DAY

THERE is no such thing, of course, as the Absolute Perfect Day, and as what is perfection to one may be far from so to another, the ultimately perfect day may be said to be like beauty, and to lie in the eye of the beholder. Perhaps it may be found in that secret centre of a man's heart which is responsive to some one of the infinitely varied chords whose harmonies make up the lovely symphony which, with all its unresolved discords and minor movements, now and then succeeds in lifting the most ordinary life a notch or two above its customary level, so that, for a time, the wheels spin free.

For some, a perfect day is made up of a kind of mountain peak, consisting of a sharp twenty minutes over grass, the fences flying under the horses' heels, the hounds rolling up the scent as though it were a reel of silk—this peak being buttressed on either side by an attendant car, into which the rider stepped perhaps at 10.30 in the morning, and into which he gets again after his ride, to uncork a thermos of tea and investigate a well-filled basket, more fiery sustenance having been found attached to the saddle. Certainly, for pure physical exhilaration, there is little to touch a good run over a fly country, the wind singing in your

ears, fence after fence slipping easily away beneath you, and the music of the racing pack making a side accompaniment to the thud of hooves on the grass.

No doubt a large percentage of hunting people have some such day in mind when they think of the most perfect they have known, and stage it not far from Leicestershire; but I am going to take the liberty of going right away from the Shires, down into the West Country, and try to show that, if there is one glory of the sun, there is another of the moon, where 90 per cent. of the field is drawn from a farming population; where a knowledge and understanding of the country is essential; where, owing to the frequent impossibility of help reaching them quickly, hounds do a great deal of beautiful work for themselves; where each jump calls for some different method of attack; and where, during the last two seasons, the number of foxes accounted for has equalled the number of days on which hounds met. And, as one of the best amateur huntsmen in the country (a description applied to every amateur huntsman in turn) has defined the perfect day as consisting of "a quick find, good horse, good place, kill in the open, your friends telling you what a good horse you have," I shall try to show how all these things may be found in the course of a day in a provincial country.

It is, no doubt, extremely pleasant to ride a horse to whom you can leave almost everything, but there is a little extra spice to be had if he needs a little watching, a little gathering together for some of the many tricky places to be found, and though a racing thoroughbred is out of place, the chief requisites,

after good shoulders and hocks, are that he should have an enduring turn of speed and be steady at his banks. Quick in decision, perhaps, but one that takes no account of what may be on the other side is, to put it mildly, an anxiety to his rider, who knows that, often enough, a period of meditation is required on the top, and that the descent cannot always be made at the same spot as the ascent. Bushes, bogs, awkwardly placed trees—there is almost nothing that may not be found on the far side of a West Country bank, so that a horse who will creep and wait and creep again will make up for a great deal in the course of an average day.

Next to natural sense in this kind of jumping, the most valuable asset is the capacity to learn, and a couple of good falls ought to be enough to teach an intelligent horse the requisite caution. He need not cost a lot of money: indeed, there is, to some minds, far more satisfaction to be found in keeping a good place in a good run with a £30 horse, which can be bucketed along and will do two days a week pretty regularly, than with the two-hundred-guinea sort, the thought of whose value makes every sudden patch of holding clay a mutual agony.

Having found the ideal horse—locally, if possible, for the sake of the extra, half proprietary interest the country will take in him—let us choose that side of the country where there is mostly moorland and open going; where the banks are big and sound, and can be taken almost anywhere without the necessity for much creeping or waiting at the only practicable place in a crumbling, bog-soaked hedge. The perfect introduction for the day is to do your own

horse before you start, and only those who have tumbled out of bed to the stable, given the horse his feed, gone back to have their own breakfast, groomed the horse, dressed themselves, and finally set off, perhaps in the last starlight before dawn, know the infinite content which such a beginning gives to the rest of the day. But, even if it does not start quite so early, the ultra-perfect day must begin by riding on to the meet, and not going by car. Jogging along, quietly enough once the froth of morning excitement has worn off, with the plovers crying in the air or keeping up a ceaseless half-twitter as they search the stubble for food, with the sudden glint of summery blue from tits in the hedges, or the white rump of a bullfinch dodging through the bushes just ahead, innumerable little touches of unexpected and unlooked-for interest decorate this approach to business.

It was while riding on to a meet that I once saw my horse make a complete fool of himself—and look it. Even on a hunting morning he was inclined to be sluggish without company, but if he heard or sensed another horse ahead of him his pace mended at once. On this particular morning the air was hollow and tingling with frost, and the ground rang under the hoofs. At a sharp bend, beyond which the road twisted up a slight hill out of sight, my horse suddenly pricked his ears and began to put his best foot foremost. I, too, heard what should have been another horse in front of us, and, indeed, looked ahead where the road rose the hill round the corner to see who it might be. Then I realised that what we had heard was nothing but the sound of our own

feet on the road, echoed back from the hard fields on the coming slope. The horse's disappointment, as the echo died away and no more companionable sounds were heard, was comical.

But, besides such little enlivening incidents, the ride to the meet gives one time to choose, in anticipation, the pick of the country which may be waiting to give the best run of the season: it certainly, on a cold day, enables one to arrive at the meet with the blood nicely warmed, and as, between horse and rider, every extra half-hour of companionship fosters a better understanding, the time saved by going by car is paid for in other ways. The villagers at their cottage doors; the cheery "Morning," or "Good sport," as you pass; the gradual falling in with others who are riding on—all lend a grace to the day to come. The best of all roads to the meet lies past the Kennels, when there is the added pleasure of the company of the hounds.

At the meet there may be ten or a dozen farmers, a red-coat or two, and a handful of black- or tweed-coated subscribers, who may spend on hunting what they save in personal adornment. Three or four from the neighbouring hunt, a cluster of foot people—it is a great solace to the unemployed countrymen when hounds meet near-by, for they say that the exercise gives them back the power of sleeping which idle days deny—and, after a few greetings, punctual to the minute, the Master moves off to the first draw. Away to the west, five miles off, is the sea, with a long line of distant moorland facing it from thirty miles away. Ahead, a great stretch of moor country, the seed-heads of cotton grass making

a russet tinge over the marshy patches, or, earlier in the year, little blue scabious making a misty carpet from which trampling hoofs draw a scent like that of bruised heliotrope. A great splash of red may mark a cluster of rowan bushes in the plantation which will be found to hold a fox if the moor does not, and on the slope where the cultivated ground leaves the moor the big gorse cover sleeps over its secret.

Most of the farmers are on likely looking horses, many of them youngsters, which they are riding until they can sell them; a couple on real raw ones keep a little apart; a great man on a great half-cart-horse-looking kind can be depended on to get through what he can't get over; and a wiry little man on a very small, unclipped pony will not be far away whatever hounds may do. At present they are feathering over the moor in a way that looks like business, and a couple of banks serve to relieve the horses' feelings and to bring the promise to fulfilment in the outlying spur of gorse beyond. The whip's cap is raised, a hound speaks, and the Master's horn tells the rest, as a big, dark dog fox slides out of the gorse and sets his mask for the best expanse of country the hunt possesses. Over the moor sweeps the pack, compact as a swarm of bees, and with them go the Master and his second whip, the first whip riding a little wide, so that, whichever way they may turn, should the fox make for a sticky bottom or otherwise obstructive crossing, he may take advantage of the nearest practicable place he knows (he has a complete chart in his head of every crossing place in the country) and be at hand on

one side while the Master is ready for them on the other.

But now there is no sign of turning. The moor, to-day, is either bone dry and a delight to ride over, or wet enough for the water to have loosened the mud, which flies out in a halo as each horse splashes his way easily along. It is the half weather that turns soft into heavy going, plucking at the horses' feet and making every stride an effort. Two or three wide-topped banks, and the road is crossed on to that part of the moor which is said to divide the good horses from the bad, because most of the banks have an overgrown ditch on one side or the other—usually, oddly enough, whichever way hounds are running, on the other—so that a good horse soon learns to jump well out and leave nothing to chance. To the right there is a dip in the ground running parallel with the line hounds are taking, and draining the higher ground, so that, here and there, is a boggy patch which takes its toll of a rider who thinks to draw a somewhat finer line than the rest. Those who know, however, and have their eyes open, stick slightly to the left of the line, for a team ploughing on the opposite slope will surely keep the fox on this side. An overgrown bank, bounding a straggly little copse, gathers the field into one or two bottle-necks at the free places, but you have been ready for this and slip through well ahead of the ruck. The going is good, and the best horses do not even change feet on the top of the next few banks, but hop on and off in their stride. Hounds are now swinging left-handed, and a sharp fall of the ground, and a sharper rise beyond, give time for

a momentary fear that they are making for the big wooded coombe that runs down to the sea and is so trying to hunt through. The biggest of these wooded coombes is called Welcome, and if there were time we might remember the heart-breaking days when we did nothing but cross from side to side, knowing, from experience, that if we waited in expectation of hounds returning (as they eventually would, of course), they would, for once, carry the line on and leave us woefully behind. "Welcome I mount as Welcome down I came," sang Benvenuto Cellini when reviewing his life and his readiness to leave it. It is scarcely probable that he ever hunted here, but the words are extraordinarily applicable at times to this coombe.

To-day, however, such fears are not justified. This fox can know nothing of the big earths half-way down the woods, and he turns away from them at a tangent. Hounds sweep round on the turn of the scent like a complete Grand National entry at the Canal Turn, and, as they pass not far from where there is a little beagle pack in kennel, their music is swelled and echoed by an answering chorus from that shrill-tongued little company. The moor is now left behind and the jumps begin to come quicker, though the banks are still honest and open. "Not a bad little hunt," cries one farmer, as he slithers along on a stocky little cob which will go all day and jumps very prettily. "Proper," comes the answer, as another gathers his horse for one of the biggest banks which has so far come our way. Straight from his hocks the horse springs, getting all four feet to the top together, and spreads himself well to clear

the ditch which might have been on the other side. A cap is raised by a farm-hand three or four banks away, with the quite unnecessary information that the fox is on. No day is complete without a fall, preferably, of course, to someone else, and here it comes. A farmer's young horse over-jumps at the bank where the cap was raised and puts himself and his rider in the ditch. Before the man is up, the owner of the cap has caught the horse and hauled himself into the saddle, his hob-nailed boots and corduroy trousers swinging and banging at the horse's sides, disdainful of the stirrup irons. But he doesn't really mean to steal a ride. Only, thinking that he has saved the day by viewing the fox, he gallops up to the Master to assure him that hounds are not ten yards behind, and then returns his borrowed mount to its rightful owner. A cloud which has been threatening in the distance now fulfils its threat, and a sharp but very short shower brings hounds to their noses again, giving the horses a welcome respite. The hounds spread like a rocket, and the Master watches them, still and quiet as a stone, till, in less than half a minute, they hit it off again.

So far the run has been all riding, and easy at that: now the shower calls for some hunting, and, skirting a farm, we drop down towards the river. Before we reach it hounds are across, throwing their tongues as keenly as ever. The knowing riders make for a handy bridge, but that involves a loss of possibly invaluable time, and you decide to take it where you come to it, launching out and hoping to find a sound bottom. Your luck is in, and you have gained a big advantage, with no one but the Master

between you and hounds. Scent is definitely poorer now, and there is a chance of seeing some careful houndwork. Doggedly they pick it out, from fence to fence, up to the farm-land and down to the river marshes again, where caution is needed, and where a country horse who knows his business may be trusted not to blunder, though he may have a bit of a struggle here and there. The field has thinned out a little, but there has been nothing much to choke anyone off. Now that the first flush of excitement is over the blood cools a little. Briskly but cautiously hounds hunt along the marshes and then turn up again, mending their pace as they lean towards another stretch of moory country. The pace suddenly quickens, and the less alert—those who have a sandwich half eaten or a flask unscrewed, or, uninterested in hounds, are indulging in a little gossip—now get left behind, and a select few lead the way at best speed once more. “My Gaw, there’s a hawful bog ’tother side!” cries the whip in a friendly way, suddenly branching off to take the next bank higher up. But the bog may or may not be true—the bank is good, and, anyway, it’s better to chance it than not, so here goes, and the risk is justified. Hounds run hard for a gorse brake as the fox, tired enough, leaves it at the far corner, and now there starts a game of dodge. A couple of fields beyond the brake is a wood straggling along the side of a stream, and hounds zigzag through this, knowing that the fox, now turning short, is rightfully theirs. He is not done yet, however, and makes a sudden snatch for the open again, the hounds coming out like a pageant, Hesther and

Pilgrim leading by a head from a couple of first-season hounds, the rest hanging close like a handkerchief blowing in the wind. But the fox hasn't a great deal more left in him. A short burst, five minutes at racing speed, for the wood had given him a short reservoir of breath and recovered strength, and, with every hound up, gaining at every stride, they roll him over in the open after fifty minutes of the best. A good hunt over, for the most part, clean, open country, and not so fast as to make it impossible to see what hounds were doing. Being of a generous nature, you are glad to see half a dozen of the other riders coming up, and, being human, you rejoice at having been the first.

This being the Perfect Day, the Master gives you the mask, with a few well-chosen words on the goodness of your horse, and then, with a cheerful "Tootle-oo!" he takes hounds on to draw in a homeward direction. The country changes, getting deeper and smaller, with narrower banks, more frequent ditches, and unreliable little water-courses, calling for more tricky jumping than we have had all day. It is not the width of the streams that causes the difficulty. They could be treated as ditches were it not that on both sides the banks are soft and treacherous, deeply undercut, and boggy nearly everywhere, so that the practicable places are few enough, and the horses have to take turns at the least bad of them, jumping from a stand and landing with all four feet together, so as to have a couple of legs to spare if the bank gives way. A steep, sheer drop into a miniature river holds up some of the shyer horses, which do not like sliding

down on their hocks with stiff forelegs reaching for the bottom, but for a reasonably good one such places are all in the day's work. Some of the banks, too, call for a little care, and instead of the gay on and off of the morning run it is now a case of a sticky, squelching scramble, a steadying stagger on the top, and a careful descent.

Happily, there is not much of this, and we push on to the higher ground to draw a great, heather-covered expanse known as Forty Acres. Here the order is "Spread out, the field, please!" and we spread over the heather, rattling our whips against the saddle flaps and expecting every moment to see a fox jump up at our feet, for hounds have a line, an undoubted line, and this being the perfect day it is on our flank that he starts away, our eyes that see him first, our voice that gives the welcoming holloa.

In a moment Master and hounds are at the spot, and once more the music breaks out, and the pace at which they make away augurs ill for the fox, who is lucky in having got a good start. Rattling through the heather, we cross a couple of big banks on to a big, open moor with only a small fence on the near boundary and a quarter of a mile's clear gallop before us. Before we reach the far side, however, a too eager cluster of foot-folk has headed him, luckily for us, for he was making for some sticky bottoms in our neighbour's territory. Now he swings slightly right-handed, offering us a most deceptive bank. It looks small enough, but there is a big drop on the other side, and a very wide, though shallow, ditch full of the sharp stubs of recently cut

saplings. From the top the horrific thing looks like the Battle of Bannockburn, but it is too late for second thoughts, so, with a lightning crouch of his quarters, your horse stretches himself like a cat and just clears the lot. A glance behind shows that the rest of the field, mistrusting your cat-like exhibition, has chosen another place which demands a queue formation, and the value of your horse rises to £100 as you give him a grateful smack with your whip.

The next jump also requires some art to negotiate. It is an ugly, overgrown place, where the bank slopes out over a yawning chasm, too wide to take in the ordinary way. The Master and whip, riding wide of you, have struck a luckier spot lower down, but are thereby forced to take the outside of the curve on which hounds are now running. Deciding to see what happens, you let your horse, now worth two hundred guineas, slide on his hocks half-way down the first slope, propping with his forelegs stretched straight out in front of him. Knowing that the only thing you can do now is to leave well alone, you sit tight and await developments. At the last moment, when his forefeet are on the very lip of the chasm, your four-hundred-guinea hunter makes his spring as you crouch low on his shoulder to avoid an overhanging branch, and the thing is done. The hounds are now a field ahead, but by putting on a "little" extra steam your five-hundred-guinea horse soon puts you on better terms with them, and you are alone with hounds and your glory, when they come to a decided check on the main road. The fox had not been expected to take this line, and half a dozen attendant cars coming up just after he had

crossed completely spoil the scent. Hounds spread like a bag of spilt beans, and then Hamlet, the puppy you walked two summers ago, shows his mettle. Under the bank he pursues an investigation of his own, finds it interesting and carries it on, right through the scattered, questing pack, while you hold your breath and never stir. Down the road he goes for a yard or two, but is disappointed. Persevering, nose close to the unforgiving tar, he comes back, threading a way through the rest of the pack again, still too doubtful even to whimper, until, ten yards farther up the road, he gives what is little more than a whisper. "Hike to Hamlet!" you murmur in rapture. Hamlet hurls himself at the opposite bank, and throwing his deep, melodious tongue takes all the pack with him as the Master and two or three of his almost inevitable "tail" come up. A hard, hustling five minutes, and the Point-to-Point course comes into view, the fox evidently making for the big earths in the woods beyond. The open course enables you to gallop close to hounds, to see the fox swerve through a hedge to avoid a man who is ditching just beyond, and to see hounds fling round after him, not two hundred yards behind. They are running for a kill, and in another moment they get their view, and it becomes an open question whether the fox will get to the earths in time, and beat the Second Whip who is racing to head him off.

As a change in the wind turns the sound of distant church-bells into a sudden clamour, so this sudden view brings a new note into their music. The fox, whose mind is a much more mechanical affair than man's, is emptied of all thought and feeling and has

become a mere automatism. His course set, every impulse is translated into mechanical action. Regardless of the ever closer cry of hounds behind him he goes on, utterly unconscious of anything except the strange compulsion that works like a spring on his galloping muscles. He is very near the wood, but hounds are still gaining. He reaches the outskirts, struggles against the rise of the ground against him, and gets home not more than a couple of yards in front of the leading hounds. It has been a grand burst of thirty-five minutes, and the Master rightly decides to leave him for another day. He has fairly won his reprieve, and, as it is a big head of earths, is in no danger of stifling himself to death. You slip out of your saddle, loosen the girths, light your pipe, and agree that it has been a perfect day, with two good runs, some fast galloping, and some beautiful houndwork. Your horse, now, perhaps, cheap at a thousand, has never gone better, and you are not alone in your opinion. Besides the Master, two or three men who know what they are talking about have a word to say about him, and the cup of your content is full. Now comes the long ride home.

By taking advantage of a car you will get your tea and bath much sooner, but the impressions of the day are apt to get blurred with haste, and you turn happily away with one or two farmers whose road lies with yours a part of the way. But, before long, you come to a farm whose home-made cider and saffron cake you have sampled before, and you get a long, delicious glass, "a piece to take in your hand," and a warmth at your heart that comes from a friendliness and generosity born of the farm-

people's eager interest in your rapid summary of the day's doings. Both you and your horse have probably had quite enough, and you will take it very easy. As you jog along, thankful for the good by-roads that serve your way, there is time to remember all the little graces of the day which passed, observed but unnoticed, during the hunt. The buzzard which, magnificent in his gold and dusky plumage, sat motionless on the hedge as you took a side line of your own for a few moments; the slim, grey heron, or crane, as it is called in these parts, flapping unhurriedly down the river; the dreadful moment when you thought your horse must stake himself on those sharp sapling-stumps; and as you remember the quick, instinctive crouch of his quarters as he took off, you hook appreciatively at his ears with the end of your whip. An immense flock of plover drawing an eyebrow line across the darkening sky reminds you that once or twice during the day you have seen similar flocks, and you wonder whether the frosts after Christmas will be very hard, for you have probably observed that such flights before Christmas prophesy hard weather after the turn of the year. Seeing a couple of men ferreting, you stop to hope their sport has been as good as your own; two road men, who always take the keenest interest in the affairs of the Hunt, must next be told, as you meet them on their way home; and then you pass through a village, where every child cries: "Did you kill?" or, much more flattering: "How many have 'ee caught to-day, then?"

You chuckle at the memory of the Master wickedly shooting a sudden question at the farmer

who was holding his thick sandwich in his teeth as he opened a gate, and the breathless moment when you thought he was going to open his mouth to answer: you remember this and that about other people's horses, and a great deal about your own, deciding that, accidents apart, you now have the Point-to-Point result in your pocket, and your mind plays for a long time with the remembered deeds of Pilgrim and Hesther, Ranter and Heiress, and the magnificent way in which your own Hamlet distinguished himself.

By this time, perhaps, your by-roads have led you to the last couple of miles, which must be done on the tar, and, your mind having happily thought all its thoughts, you pull up and get off, slipping the reins over your arm, your whip round your shoulders, and taking the roadside of the best horse in the world, tramp contentedly home beside him, tired, but not fatigued, and emptied of all but the peaceful contentment of mind and body which comes as a perfect finish to the day.

Not many days will be so good as this. You will, often enough, have to ride home many more miles, with a biting wind cutting through your rain-sodden clothes till your knees are numb and your fingers and toes ready to drop off with the cold. You may have to lead a lame horse, your mind clouded with anxiety lest his lameness should mean a long period of inaction. There will be days when you curse your folly for hunting at all, and swear that the game is not worth the candle. But even then, in your heart of hearts, you will not believe yourself. Against your will you will remember

some saving grace: it may be a recollection of hounds wresting scent from the spiteful day, or of a clean, upstanding fox running unconcernedly through the trees close beside you, or of your horse taking some ticklish place that no one else would have. Whatever it may be there is always something, though what it is that makes for happiness in a long ride home, tired on a tired horse, it is hard to discover.

It may be a subconscious knowledge that it is only your body being buffeted by the gale, soaked with the rain or stung with hails, and that the discomfort is external and will pass and be forgotten within the hour. There is even a very Spartan joy in shelving your advantages as a person, and taking a place in the universal rhythm of nature as a performer and not as one of the audience. For there is certainly something better than a comfortable car and an immediate bath and change; something untouched by the discomfort of cold and wet limbs; something that enables you to "tune in" for a time to the universal wave-length on which the harmony of the whole visible and invisible world is transmitted.

When the evening is fine and fresh, with an occasional early primrose in the hedge or the full flood of them at the end of the season and a long after-glow running round the sky, when you ride along with your coat unbuttoned and your hat pushed back off your forehead, and a complacent contentment moving along beside you like a quiet, familiar friend, then you know the utterly perfect end to a perfect day.

A NOTE ON BOOKS

OF all writers on fox-hunting, Surtees is surely the best known, and even if non-hunting people are sometimes uncertain whether Surtees wrote Jorrocks or Jorrocks wrote Surtees, their very uncertainty is evidence that the two names are famous. Light has recently been thrown on Surtees himself in an admirable book by Mr. Frederick Watson, *Robert Smith Surtees*, which every one, fox-hunter or not, might well read with profit and much pleasure. Moreover, this book makes the re-reading of Surtees himself much more interesting, as we are enabled to see and understand a good deal of what was going on behind the scenes in Surtees' mind. It is a comprehensive and comprehending analysis of the books, their author, and his times.

Side by side with this might be kept *Robert Smith Surtees*, by Himself and E. D. Cuming. Mr. Cuming discovered some hitherto unknown essays and notes among Surtees' papers, and with their aid has built up a very satisfying and interesting portrait of the Durham fox-hunter and his life. It is full of anecdote and reminiscence and, together with Mr. Watson's book, gives a fine new flavour to Surtees' own books.

There is a score and more of other books full of interest and information to anyone who takes an interest in fox-hunting. Mr. Scarth-Dixon's *Hunting in Olden Days* is a mine of little-known history, and

Vyner's *Notitia Venatica* is a kind of exalted and amplified Beckford, dealing exhaustively with the history of the science of fox-hunting, containing an enormous amount of information and anecdote about hounds, their history, breeding, performances, and management, and there are few notable experiments and experiences of past hound masters which are not described and commented on here.

Sir Walter Gilbey's *Hounds in Old Days* is the most interesting book on the history and evolution of the hound that exists or is likely to exist. He deals with all kinds of hounds—beagles, harriers, otter hounds and staghounds, as well as fox-hounds, and there is a very good chapter on the Welsh hound. He traces hound history and breeding as far back as it is possible to go, and gives a very complete account of the old French "white hounds," as well as the curiosities met with in the Middle Ages and at times ever since. As a handbook on the evolution of the hound it is unsurpassed. His book on *Horses Past and Present* is also full of interest.

G. F. Underhill's *A Century of English Fox-Hunting*, H. O. Nethercote's *The Pytchley Hunt Past and Present*, Tom Smith's lovely *Life of a Fox*, Colonel Cooke's *Observations on Fox-Hunting* are all of very great interest. The Badminton Library volume on *Hunting* and the Lonsdale Library on *Fox-Hunting* treat the subject from every point of view. Guy Paget's *The Melton Mowbray of John Fernley* and Captain Frank Siltzer's *The Story of British Sporting Prints* throw a light from a different angle, and Thormanby's *Kings of the Hunting Field* gives biographies and anecdotes of almost all

the men whose names have been notable in the sport.

Some of the much older books are well worth reading, and there were a good many produced in Tudor and Jacobean times. Gervase Markham's *Country Contentments* and Blundeville's books are interesting as more than museum pieces, while Turberville's sixteenth-century *Booke of Hunting* — is full of old customs and observances of the chase.

Last of all in this scanty selection comes a book of quite a different texture. Professor D. H. Madden — has willed himself back into Shakespearean times, and in *The Diary of Master William Silence* he imagines Shakespeare down in Gloucestershire with some of the originals of his play-characters, hunting, hawking, living the life of a country gentleman. It is a wonderful book, and contrives not only to make Shakespeare very human, but also to give a very credible key to the "sources" of many of his allusions, similes, and comparisons. It shows his mind saturated with country scenes and country lore, and in a long chapter called "The Horse in Shakespeare" shows him not only as a man who had a great affection for horses, but also as one who knew practically all that can be known about them, their use and abuse. A reading of the whole book, but especially of this chapter, gives a far clearer insight into much of Shakespeare's meaning in disputed and doubtful passages than is to be found in any ordinary text-book notes, and also a better knowledge and understanding of much phraseology applied to horses and horsemanship. It is an

entirely delightful book, not less so for being, unobtrusively, extremely informative.

There are many other books dealing with hunting in some form. This list is intended only as a guide to enable those who are interested, academically or practically, in fox-hunting to find further delights which will give an extra interest to that best of all sports. These books will form a very good nucleus for a hunting library, and if "Nimrod's" *Hunting Tours* and *Hunting Reminiscences* are added and the "Druid's" works, especially *Post and Paddock*, *Silk and Scarlet*, and *Scott and Sebright*, the fox-hunter will have a shelf to which he may turn with relief and delight long after he has given up riding to hounds.

